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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK

VOL. II.

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK

BY THE LATE

JOHN WOOD WARTER

AUTHOR OF 'THE SEABOARD AND THE DOWN'
ETC.

EDITED BY RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D.

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AN OLD SHROPSHIRE OAK.

Ὑπ' αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς περικαλλέϊ φηγῷ.

Iliad, E' 693.

The air that floated by me seemed to say,
'Write! thou wilt never have a better day.'
And so I did.

KEATS'S *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, Sept. 1816.

Pleraque eorum quæ retuli, quæque referam, parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri, non nescius sum.

TACIT. *Annal.* iv. c. 32.

Thus I entertain
The antiquarian humour, and am pleased
To skim along the surfaces of things,
Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.

WORDSWORTH'S *Excursion*, p. 92.

Gravestones tell truth scarce forty years. Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks.

SIR T. BROWNE'S *Hydriotaphia, or Urn-burial*, c. v. vol. iii. 491. Ed. Wilkins.

A tree on which the host of dreams
Low murmur mystic things.

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON'S *Poems; Love's Sudden Growth*, p. 135.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONQUEST OF ENGLAND.

To swallow up, and to be swallowed up, is the world's history.—DR. PUSEY on Obadiah, v. 16.

> Engelond ys a wel god lond, ich wene of eche lond best,
> Y set in the ende of the worlde, as al in the west.
> The see goth hym al a boute, he stont as an yle.
> ROBERT OF GLOUCESTER'S *Chronicle*, ad init.

> Bytuene Mighelmasse and Seynt Luc, a Sayn Calexte's day,
> As vel in thulke yere in a Sater day,
> In the yere of grace, as it vel al so
> A thousand and syxe and syxty, this batayle was y do.
> *Ibid.* p. 363, Hearne Reprint.

It was in the year A.D. 1066 that this aspiring people sailed from Normandy to attempt the conquest of England, which, during six hundred years, the Anglo-Saxons had been occupying.—SHARON TURNER, *Hist. of England during the Middle Ages*, i. 72.

THE very able historian from whom the above motto is taken had previously remarked: 'In the Norman history we contemplate the interesting spectacle of a barbarous people civilising themselves with unexampled rapidity, and then improving a nation—our own—that had long been more civilised than its teachers. The progress deserves our attention, as it gives us a splendid instance of one of the processes by which the improvement of the world is made to advance, amid all the perversities of human nature, and the casualties of human affairs.'

As I have observed before, Turner possibly rates the Norman progress and advance towards civilisation at this time too highly; but there can be no doubt but that the Conquest, in its results, materially tended to the aggrandisement of the English nation. For though it is certain, as may

be inferred from ancient records, that there were good men and good patriots in the land at this time, yet is it equally certain that among the clergy and the laity—among borrel men and clerks—there was a rude barbarism nevertheless which was increasing with increasing ignorance. Almost all book knowledge evidently was confined to monasteries and towns, and in the country to the priests, like many of the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury—parishes which, by the time-honoured Oak's report generally, must have been well served.

On inquiring of my Talking Friend how, in the course of years, these out-of-the-way parishes were so fortunate in their priests, his answer was, that for his father's early days he could say nothing; but as regarded his own time 'he thought the reason was this, that they were resorted to by men of contemplation, who were tired of the town, and probably of monastic seclusion.' And likely enough was it, for several came from the abbey at Shrewsbury, and were constant friends of the successive abbots. Visited were they likewise by many, both seculars and regulars; and, in truth, these parishes seemed to have served as a sort of 'sanatorium.' And I bethought me of Keats's lines, who had Milton in his mind's eye when he wrote them:—

> To one who has been long in city pent,
> 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
> And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
> Full in the smile of the blue firmament.

At the same time my Talking Friend added without reserve that in his father's days, and in his own, there had been many very ignorant priests, perfectly indifferent to the teaching of the people. And I could not but call to mind honest old Latimer's words: 'Some be so obstinate in their old *mumpsimus* that they cannot abide the true doctrine of God.' And if this was so even after the Reformation, what must it have been in days preceding it!

'Some would think,' says one of our old dramatists, 'the souls of princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause than those of meaner persons. They are deceived: there's the same hand to them. The same reason that makes

a vicar go to law for a tithe pig and undo his neighbours makes them spoil a whole province, and batter down goodly cities with the cannon.'

Leaving out the cannon, of which he knew nothing, so might some Anglo-Saxon have said on the arrival of the Norman. And if

> It may appear to some ridiculous
> Thus to talk knave and madman, and sometimes
> Come in with a dried sentence stuffed with sage,

there is some pith in the remarks nevertheless. The Norman was no doubt wild, savage, intemperate, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, as a Plantagenet when his mad fit was on; but make the best of him at this time, and the Saxon was become rude, boorish, ignorant, rough, and prejudiced.

Many have thought and maintained, as has been before hinted, that the Saxons, had they been more united, might have held their ground and repelled the invaders; but there had been many causes at work to weaken their liberties. Perhaps what Mr. Dasent says in his Introduction to the 'Burnt Njal'—it was pleasant to me to see it in an English dress—is pretty near the truth: 'The Saxons were no hare-hearted folk; their arms were as stalwart and their thews as strong as those of the men whom they met at Hastings; but their utmost efforts were powerless against the serried ranks and improved tactics of Duke William and his knights. The inert mass of Saxon nationality fell never to rise again on that blood-stained field, while the banners of the Bastard's chivalry passed lightly over it from victory to victory, until they had made the whole land their own.' The simple truth is that the Saxon dynasty and people had run their race. For as the great philosophic poet, Lord Brooke, said in his 'Treatise of Warres':—

> States have degrees, as human bodies have—
> Spring, summer, autumn, winter, and the grave.

At the same time the Norman—when he spoke the truth, and after he had intermarried with the Saxon, as was before the case with the Romans and the Danes—was not unwilling to acknowledge the Saxon's ability in many respects. For

instance, if the Norman claimed to be the best swordsman, he at once admitted that the Saxon was the best archer; and, as we all of us know, the bow and the arrow are Saxon words, not Norman. Even William, as he sat in the Curia Regis, which had succeeded to the Witenagemot, acknowledged this, and he said: 'Though all power emanates from ourselves, and we will admit of no tenant right' (which, as Lambarde said, 'is but a descent of a tenancy at will') 'yet will we give the Saxon his due—none strings his bow better.'

To a certain extent, no doubt, after the battle was won William, who would have it thought that he came rightly to the throne, and as if by inheritance, wished to conciliate the Saxons by kindness and affability, encouraging intermarriages with his own people. But, though he was king and conqueror, it was not easy to bring this about; for his nobles thought themselves far superior in race and intellect to the Saxon boor; and 'in the life of the Saxon Hereward,' says Mr. Wright, 'we see the Norman knights in their baronial halls, listening to their *jongleur*, or minstrel, while he turned to ridicule, by his coarse and indecent satire, and his comic gestures, the manners of the people whom they had dispossessed of their lands.'

At the time of the invasion the Normans called themselves Frenchmen, and are so called in the laws of William the Conqueror; but for some time they not only looked upon the Saxons as barbarians, but called them so; a pretty common custom from the days of Herodotus and Thucydides to those of Ovid—

> Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor ulli,
> Et rident stolidi verba Latina Getæ;

and downwards yet still to modern days, when the Chinese have favoured the English nation generally with the same appellation, framing their speech literally so as to say with the royal monarch to the aged chorus—

> Σοῦ γὰρ λέγοντος οὐκέτ' ἂν μάθοιμ' ἐγὼ,
> τὴν βάρβαρον γὰρ γλῶσσαν οὐκ ἐπαΐω.

It has been stated before that Robert of Gloucester followed the 'Saxon Chronicle' in the account of Duke William

The same may be said as regards 'Domesday Book,' though the copy is not so close. The reader may like to see the lines:—

Anon in thulke salue yer yt wolde be
The Kyng Wyllam, vorto wyte the wurth of lond,
Let enquery streytlyche thoru al Engelond,
How mony plou lond, and how mony hyden al so,
Were in everyche ssyre, and what hii were wurth therto;
And rentys of eche toun, and the wateres echone,
That worthe, and of wodes ek, that ther ne byleuede none,
That he wurte what hii were wurthe, and so under stonde
And wyte al clene y non, and that wryt dade ywys
In the tresorye at Westmynstre, there as yt yut ys.
So that our kynges satthe, wanne hii ransoum toke,
I resy what fole mygte gyve, hii founde ther in her boke.

So much has been written upon 'Domesday Book' that it would be out of place to say much here; but a record so valuable requires a word or two.

As to the year of its commencement, whether A.D. 1080 or A.D. 1081, there may be some room for dispute; but as to the year of its completion there can be none, for the lesser volume concludes with these words: '*Anno millesimo octogesimo sexto ab Incarnatione Domini, vigesimo vero Regni Willielmi, facta est ista descriptio non solum per hos tres Comitatus, sed etiam alios.*' It is thought that the Books of Exeter and Ely, which are of the same date, were copied from the same returns, although they contain more details. The Book of Winchester dates from A.D. 1148, and the 'Boldon Book,' containing records for the county of Durham, was made A.D. 1183.

A book of something of the same nature was drawn up for King Alfred, in which reference is made to the times of Ethelred, in the same way as in 'Domesday Book' reference is made to those of Edward the Confessor. Great, therefore, as is the value of the *cadastre* (as the French would call it), it did not originate with William. And on this point there is a very suggestive note in Mr. Eyton's 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' which I shall venture to transcribe, notwithstanding its length:—

The *phenomena* of such a record as *Domesday* are always

worth observation. It is clear from the Shropshire portion of the survey that the accounts given of a previous state of things (in the time of King Edward) generally refer to a particular part of his reign. I conclude, therefore, that the *Domesday* Commissioners for Shropshire gathered these particulars from some written record, not from oral testimony of persons whose recollections would necessarily refer to various periods of a bygone era. This supposed pre-existing record I further observe to contemplate that period of the Confessor's reign when the Countess Godiva was a widow, and Edwin and Morcar were earls: in other words, it was taken in the short interval which elapsed between the deaths of Earl Algar (1059) and King Edward (January 5, 1066).

'In this respect an anterior record, to which the *Domesday* Commissioners for Staffordshire seem to have referred, was different; for their notes mainly allude to a period when Algar was Earl of Mercia—i.e. between August 31, 1057 (when Earl Leofric died), and 1059. However the names of both Earl Morcar and Earl Edwin occur in the Staffordshire survey, so that it would seem that the Commissioners consulted more than one pre-existing record or else admitted oral testimony.'

On inquiring of my Talking Friend if he had ever heard his venerable father say anything about 'Domesday,' he told me he had, and that, as is usual, it caused considerable alarm. No doubt one said one thing, and one another, and they were panic-struck.

> Each thinks his own
> Opinion best, and must perform 't alone
> Or else remain, as hitherto they had,
> Busie in doing nothing.

So it was generally in Anglo-Saxon distractions at this time. And as for the people on the Rea side—about Cruck Meole, Cruckton, and Hanwood, and as far as the Lea, Hinton, Pontesford, Pontesbury, and Minsterley, and so onwards to Cherbury, Worthen, and Shelve—they could not, for the life of them, make out why their mills and their meadows, their streams and their brooks, should be surveyed, their ploughs, and their oxen, and their horses taken account

of, their swine even valued and told by the tale from the old boundary oak to the meer-stone on the Lythe, and the poor bee-carl and his hives registered and filed. They were sure it could never come to good. Suspicion and too-accurate calculations were ever co-mates. Even the priests of Pontesbury and Hanwood, as they sat beneath his shade, and, as they said in their Saxon phrase, '*chewed* the matter'—the Norman, with a snort, would have said *ruminated on*—declared that they should be well satisfied when they heard that the Commissioners had departed from Scrobbesbyrig, the town of the alders, and why they had so recently sent messengers to Polrebec (probably the modern Pulverbach, or *Powtherbitch*) was a mystery to them. There was, in fact, a very general alarm all along the Rea's banks to its junction with the Severn, pretty much like to that which overwhelmed the people when they first heard of the invasion of the Normans; but after a while it settled down, as such commotions are wont to do, and the time-honoured old tree said, 'The bee-carl gathered the honey, and the housewife made the mead, and the people fared little the worse.' As was before remarked, it was not the little people that suffered so much by the Norman invasion as the great estates of the Saxon nobility, who were ejected from their lands.

And I bethought me of a greater alarm—the great alarm of the Great Domesday, or Day of Assize, such as Chamberlayne sketched in the 'Pharonnida.'

> If souls new fled
> From tainted bodies that have surfeited
> On studied sins could be discerned when they,
> Unarmed with penitence, are haled away
> By long-armed fiends, less pale, less horrid, would
> Their guilty looks appear; confusion could
> Not live in livelier emblem, each appears
> To fly the danger, but about him bears
> Its pale effects. So passengers forsake
> A sinking ship; such strong convulsions shake
> Surprised forts; so Domesday's trumpet shall
> Startle the unprepared world, when all
> Her atoms in their then worn robes shall be
> Ravished in flames to meet eternity.

But great men—emperors and kings, czars and kaisers,

conquerors like William or the mightiest of his hordes—must *die like men*, and so

> Upon the bed of frail mortalitie
> Lies conquering William, in the arms of death.

As the compiler of that portion of the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' puts it, 'Sharp death, that leaves neither powerful men nor humble, took him. He died in Normandy the next day after the nativity of St. Mary (September 9), and he was buried at Caen, in the monastery of St. Stephen, which he had formerly erected and afterwards manifoldly endowed. Alas! how false and how unstable is this worldly wealth! He who was before a powerful king, and lord of many a land, had then of all his lands only a portion—seven feet—and he who was whilom decked with gold and with gems lay there covered over with mould.' So wrote the monk, for such he probably was, and some one in after days almost copied his words in what Hawes, in his 'Pastime of Pleasure,' would call this 'little epitaphy':—

> This great King William lieth here,
> Entombed in little grave;
> So great a lord, so small a home
> Sufficeth him to have.

The same old chronicle above referred to represents the year preceding William's death, and the year of his death as well, as most disastrous for England. For example, A.D. 1086: 'The same year was a very heavy, and toilsome, and sorrowful year in England through murrain of cattle, and corn and fruits were at a stand, and so great unpropitiousness in weather as no one can easily think; so great was the thunder and lightning that it killed many men; and ever it grew worse with men more and more. May God Almighty better it when it shall be His will!' And under the next year, the year of the Conqueror's death, things were not mended; indeed, it was 'a very heavy and very pestilent year in this land. Such a malady came on men that almost every other man was in the worst evil—that is, with fever—and that so strongly that many men died of the evil.' To which it is presently added: 'But such things befall for a folk's sins,

because they will not love God and righteousness. So as it was in those days that little righteousness was in this land with any man, save with the monks alone, wherever they fared well. The king and the head men loved much, and over much, covetousness in gold and in silver, and recked not how sinfully it might be got provided it came to them. The king gave his land as dearly for rent as he possibly could; then came some other and bade more than the others had before given, and the king let it to the man who had bidden him more; then came a third and bade yet more, and the king gave it up to the man who had bidden most of all. And he recked not how very sinfully the reeves got it from poor men, and how many illegalities they did; but the more that was said about right law, the more illegalities were done. They levied unjust tolls, and many other unjust things they did which are difficult to reckon. Also, in the same year, before autumn, the holy monastery of St. Paul, the episcopal see of London, was burnt, and many other monasteries, and the greatest and fairest part of the whole city.'

Such are the accounts given, and probably, as I said, by a Saxon monk, who at least discovered that heavy judgments were upon the land for sin. And when we read such accounts, after having made all just allowances, we cannot wonder at the alarm of the people generally. If the retainers of the great Saxon earls did not feel the evil so much as their ejected masters, it was the policy of their masters to press it upon them, thereby to gain their assistance and co-operation; for what might have been commanded on any other occasion must be besought on this. With some, no doubt, that

> Amor patriæ, ratione valentior omni,

would have its due and proper weight; but many a slave and villein would be ready to yield where might made right, unless united by some common bond, and in many parts of the land a common fear was the only connecting link. And the thoughtful monk in his narrow cell would naturally ask—

> What will betide the few,
> His faithful, left among the unfaithful herd,
> The enemies of truth?

But if the monk in the 'Saxon Chronicle' spoke according to his own views of the matter, we may be thankful that he had the opportunity of speaking at all; because had it not been for the clergy—the *clerici* generally—it is little we should have known of either old Saxon or early Norman days. Others there were, of course, who were the conservators of learning in their way, and their honoured names may be read in history; but they were few and far between, and a man might have counted them on his fingers. As for the country and out-of-the-way places—like the whole course of the Rea—in these all knowledge almost was confined to the priest, and of many, as of the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury at different times, might it have been said—

> There in his humble dwelling he appears
> A labourer, with moral virtue girt,
> With spiritual graces, like a glory, crowned.

As for historians and writers of greater repute, they were to be found only about the Court—in the larger towns and cities—and in the monasteries.

The following passage from the 'Reliquiæ Hearnianæ' may be extracted here, and may be connected with the statements of Ingulphus, the Conqueror's friend and secretary, relative to his dislike to the English language, and his desire that all laws and law proceedings should be in French.

'*May* 22, ANNO 1076.—William the Conqueror was at the Abbey of Abingdon for some time, with which place (especially the isle of Anderscey, so called from its being sacred to St. Andrew), he was wonderfully delighted, and therefore both he and his son William Rufus came there often. Here some tell us he first heard of exhibitions, settled by King Alfred on the University of Oxford, with which he was much displeased, and therefore took them away, for fear they might encourage the scholars to keep still to the Saxon tongue. But this I look upon as a poor occasion for his withdrawing them, since he had confirmed King Edward's laws, by which it was established that no scholars nor those of the clergy for any cause should be injured. I look upon the scholars' firmness to Edgar Atheling to be the true reason. As for Anders-

cey, at Abingdon, there was in old time a church in that isle dedicated to St. Andrew, and there was in the Saxon times also a royal palace.'

The question is still, perhaps, an open one as regards the foundation of Oxford by Alfred, and documents have been forged; but there is no doubt whatever about Oxford being a place of education in Saxon times. Neither again can there be any doubt as to the spread of knowledge in the early Norman times. They may have endeavoured to put down the Saxon tongue, but their learned men came over from the Continent, and most ecclesiastical offices were filled with men educated there. Later in date the words of Partenopex of Blois look this way:—

> Send for the Bishop of Paryse,
> He ys a clerke and ther to ryche and wise,
> And canne good skyle of sermoning—
> He knoweth the helpe of alle thynge.

Traders also came over the water with their packs and their merchandise, as expressed in the language of the same old romance:—

> Hedyr shall come many a fayre merchaunt
> Fro Venyse, ffro Ipen, and fro Gaunt;

and all these not only tended to spread amongst the Anglo-Saxons the knowledge of other countries, but were the importers of much mixed information likewise. Many a MS. of sheepskin did they introduce, and were the first to blame any member of a guild who could commit such a waste as to work up sheepskins into shields when they might be converted into parchments. Indeed, the small traders' interest of those days very often brought about considerable results, and the 'traveller,' if we may venture to use the modern term, did in his way what the post does now. He was the bearer of 'redes' and letters from one land to another. In the words of the old Danish ballad, he knew how to frame his speech to each customer:—

> Snild var han i Tale sin,
> Han kunde vel foie sine Ord.

But all this is matter of history, not for this place, and

I will therefore here only refer to one matter more—the buildings and the architecture of the time.

Now there is no doubt but that the buildings of the common people remained pretty much as they were in Saxon times; and as for the tenements on the Rea side, they were but reed and thatch. Nor need this be wondered at, for London in those days had but wooden houses. Many indeed of this sort, and thatched ones too, remained on the Strand, or Riverside, later than the days of James I. The 'Thatched House Tavern' is the last memorial of their times, and, like the '*Casa Romuli*,' served to remind the lordly Londoners of times gone by:—

> Hinc ad Tarpeiam sedem et Capitolia ducit,
> Aurea nunc, olim silvestribus horrida dumis.

Nor were the houses of these times like the wooden houses now to be seen in Norway and Sweden or in our colonies, where timber is plentiful; but they were very sorry things indeed. And it may be observed, by the way, that although many baronial castles were raised in William and his son's reigns, yet before the time of Henry II. there were very few ordinary mansions of stone, if indeed any. The fact is, that every Norman sought protection in his baronial keep, and it was exactly as the 'Saxon Chronicle' tells, in the days of Stephen, under A.D. 1137: 'Every powerful man made his castles, and held them against him; and they filled the land full of castles. They cruelly oppressed the wretched men of the land with castle works, and when the castles were made they were filled with devils and evil men.' It is stated by Ralph de Diceto that as many as 'eleven hundred and fifteen castles were rased from their foundations in the short space of nineteen years.' And when Dr. Hook says, 'For Stephen himself was only a baron on a larger scale,' he notes that 'in each castle the baron reigned as a sovereign: he coined his own money, he dictated his laws to his dependants, he had the power of life and death, he carried on war with his neighbours. With very few exceptions, the eleven hundred and forty kings were tyrants.'

From all of this we see that if the common dwellings of

the people and of private individuals were mean, those of the barons were as strongholds and fenced cities. And it must be conceded at once that if the Saxon was superior to the Norman in works of art—in weaving, in the working of gold and silver, or in jewellery—yet in architecture he was altogether inferior. Whilst the Norman had all the experience of the freemason to work with, the Saxon had but his native artisan. 'The construction of the few churches which they erected,' says Dr. Hook, 'was of the most modest character, consisting of what is called "long and short work," bearing such analogy to wooden buildings as to have been called "stone carpentry."' It is not denied that the Saxons may have had some assistance from the freemasons, for their society existed long before the Norman came in; but as the freemasons of the Norman's days were, if I may so express it, an ecclesiastical body, with the Pope at their head, the Norman prelates had every advantage in the building of their glorious cathedrals. Who, when he looks upon these marvellous structures, will not read of one of a later date with pleasure in the words of Wordsworth's beautiful sonnet?—

> Tax not the royal saint with vain expense,
> With ill-matched aims the architect who planned,
> Albeit labouring for a scanty band
> Of white-robed scholars only, this immense
> And glorious work of fine intelligence!
> Give all thou canst; high heaven rejects the lore
> Of nicely calculated less and more.
> So deemed the man who fashioned fro the sense
> These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
> Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
> Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
> Lingering, and wandering on as loth to die;
> Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality.

As connected with the early buildings of our Saxon forefathers, but more generally with those of the Norman, it may be remarked that the semicircular arch has been found in the ruins of Carthage, at Egyptian Thebes, and at Nineveh. Those at Old Upsala, in Sweden, which have been traced out, part by one and part by another, are probably

not those of the old pagan structure, but of the church which was rebuilt there in 1139. Clearly this circular arch is of much greater antiquity than used to be supposed. Known to the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Greeks, it passed over from the latter to the Etruscans, and from them the Romans copied it, and, as Fergusson says, 'adopted it boldly, and introduced it into almost all their buildings.' But perhaps what has to be said on this subject may be well summed up in the words of that very able judge in this matter, to whose treatise the reader is referred.

'What the Normans brought over with them was not so much a new style as a bolder and more perfect manner of treating one already in use, together with the better constructed processes, and altogether a more perfect conception, arising from considerable experience of the true nature of architectural design and the true mode of producing the desired effect. Thus Norman architecture introduced so many novelties as to form an entirely new era in that used by the Saxons. Perhaps the novelties in question were as much owing to the new institutions introduced by the Conquest as to the new architectural processes invented in France. The confiscation or appropriation of the estates of the Saxons had thrown immense wealth into the hands of the followers of William, and enriched the aristocracy, both feudal and ecclesiastical, to an extent previously unknown. Besides this, the centralisation of power and the more vigorous administration of the laws afforded that leisure so indispensable to the successful prosecution of any branch of the fine arts. These causes would alone have sufficed to make an epoch in architecture, and combined with the knowledge which the conquerors had acquired in the art effected a complete revolution.'

Meanwhile, leaving Gundulph to his works at Rochester, Walkelyn to those at Winchester, and Lanfranc to his buildings at Canterbury, and regretting that it was thought necessary, in the summer of 1821, to take down a Norman arch belonging to Robert de Belesme's castle at Bridgenorth, which he had built there when he removed the town of Quatfort, it is now only necessary here to report what the Old Oak said

when asked, 'Was the Conqueror ever at Scrobbesbyrig, or Shrewsbury?'

The reply of the time-honoured tree, as far as I could make out from my Talking Friend, was in the negative; at the same time he added 'that he had himself heard it reported that he had been there, and that the occasion of his visit was upon the natives of Wales and Cheshire burning his castle there, in which wild forage they were assisted by Edric Streon and other fierce burghers.'

On turning to the 'Saxon Chronicle' I find under A D. 1069 that 'the King was on the day of Midwinter at York, and so all the winter in the land; and came to Winchester at the same Easter.' If at any time, it was on this occasion that journeying southwards he visited the old town; but the testimony of the Old Oak on the Rea side seems against it. The able historians so often referred to would appear to agree witn him. At all events here are their words: 'The King despatched two earls, William and Brican, to the relief of the castle; but before they could arrive the rebels had departed, having burned the town. In revenge for this insult the King left York, where he had been keeping his Christmas, and marched his army early in the year 1069 against the invaders, *et Merciorum regione*, says Ordericus, *motus hostiles regiâ vi compescuit*;' and if ever he honoured Shrewsbury with a visit, as one MS. record of suspicious authority says he did, it was probably on this occasion.

It may not be altogether out of place to mention that the first lawsuit after the Conquest was that between Lanfranc and Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, at a shire-mote on Penenden Heath. The reader may see a very interesting account of it in Dean Hook's 'Life of Lanfranc,' with the original report from Wilkins' 'Concilia,' in which, amongst other things, it is recorded that 'Egelric, Bishop of Chichester, a very aged man, most thoroughly acquainted with the laws of the land, by the King's command was conveyed thither, in a carriage drawn by four beasts, to discuss and point out the ancient usages of the laws.' We should be very glad now to secure a fuller interpretation of some of the customs which came before them to discuss at that memorable trial; such as these:

soca, saca, toll, team, flymena-fyrmthe, grithbrece, foresteal, infangentheof, &c. &c. The Old Oak by the Rea side would have gloried in the Saxon terms, and have been much delighted at the puzzle-headedness of a Norman when enforced to listen to what an Anglo-Saxon bishop had to interpret. Egelric evidently knew more than all the rest that were present.

To pass from law to hospitality is a pleasant thing, and it may be recorded by way of conclusion that Lanfranc erected at Canterbury 'two *xenodochia* or *ptochotrophia*, one at the north and the other at the west end of the city, to which he assigned yearly pensions;' hospitals these, 'like St. Cross, near Winchester, for the entertainment of passengers, and as a home for the destitute.'

Where are they now? Have they followed the unjust fate of that founded by Bishop Henry of Blois, brother of Stephen, in 1132? The founders were men to say, 'Heaven's gate is low, and he must stoop that goes in at it.' Many who since the days of the founder have crossed the threshold of St. Cross have clean forgotten this, and the hungry have gone away an-hungred, and the thirsty without slaking their thirst. Pity 'tis that one has to say of many a charitable bequest, as George Herbert said—

> It is gone
> Quite underground, as flowers depart
> To see their mother root when they have blown;
> Where they together
> All the hard weather
> Dead to the world keep home unknown.

CHAPTER XIX.

STATE OF SHROPSHIRE AT THE TIME OF THE CONQUEST.

Nescio quid animus majus et solito amplius
Supràque fines moris humani tumet,
Instatque pigris manibus; haud, quid sit, scio,
Sed grande quiddam est.

SENECA, *Thyest.* 267.

England being now completely conquered, and the power of its ancient nobles destroyed, William proceeded to distribute the spoils among his adherents. . . . He distributed his grants of houses and lands so profusely that low and poor Normans found themselves raised to great proprietors; and many had tenants under them far richer than their own parents.—S. TURNER'S *Middle Ages*, ch. iv. vol. i. 112.

Machynlleth (pronounced Makuntleth) is one of the principal towns of the district which the English call Montgomeryshire and the Welsh Shire Trefaldwyn, or the Shire of Baldwin's Town. Trefaldwyn is the town of Baldwyn, being the Welsh name for the town which is generally called Montgomery.—BORROW'S *Wild Wales*, vol. ii. p. 97.

The world is grown so bad
That wrens may prey where eagles dare not perch;
Since every Jack became a gentleman,
There's many a gentle person made a Jack.

Richard III. act i. sc. 3.

WITH a very different feeling from Gloucester's, in the above quotation, might the Saxon noble have said that 'many a gentle person' was ejected from his ancestral acres, and reduced to almost villainage. And a hard servitude indeed it was to submit to the lordly and imperious Norman!

It has been said that Canute restored all to their posts and possessions when he overcame. But so did not William. His glory was in conquest, and, as a conqueror, he could not feel safe amongst the sturdy Saxons, in whose blood there was much of the Norse and the Dane; unless he dispossessed them of their place and eminence, first or last, they would be

sure to dispossess him and his barons ; and that he determined to keep all he could for himself and for them may be pretty clearly inferred from his reply to the Earl of Flanders, who had hoped to have a share in the spoil of England. Take the account in the words of good old John Stow, in 'his "Annales, or General Chronicle of England."'

'The Earl of Flanders, having sent assistance unto William the Conqueror towards his enterprise of England, requested to hear of him what part or portion of the said country he should have for his share, if he obtained it. The Conqueror answered that before his departure he would give him to understand by writing, which delaying even unto the very time that he was ready to embark he then in fine parchment folded and sealed up sent him two verses in French, the effect whereof in English is this :—

> I have unto your part assigned
> All what here you'll written find.

And that was just nothing, for in all the parchment there was not any one word written save only these verses, giving hereby to understand that he meant not to make him a sharer with him in the kingdom of England.'

But as our history is more or less local the question to determine here is, 'What was the state of Shropshire and Shrewsbury at and about and after the Conquest?'

As is well known, at the time of the Conquest, Edwin held the earldom of Mercia and extensive estates in Shropshire, and he opposed the invasion of his native land. Yet after the battle of Hastings he gave in his submission with his brother, Earl Morcar, Edric the Wild, and other nobles of their party. However, on William visiting Normandy in A.D. 1067 they were the first to rebel ; and on his return Morcar was taken in the isle of Ely and imprisoned ; and Edwin, after a while, was treacherously slain, and his head brought to the Conqueror. The 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' records this under the year A.D. 1071. 'In this year Earl Eadwine and Earl Morkere fled away, and went diversly in woods and in fields. Eadwine was foully slain by his own men, and Morkere by ship went to Ely,' &c.

On Edwin's death the Welsh or British kings, who had previously joined the Danes to dispossess the Saxons of the rich lowlands of Powis, or Powîsa, in Shropshire, now joined the Normans with the same intent, and it was at this time that that powerful Saxon thane—Edric the Forester (*Silvaticus*, the *Savage* or the *Wild*; still common names all in this county), 'nephew of the celebrated Edric Streon, and possessed of an immense estate in Shropshire, undismayed by the defeat of Edwin—rose up against the Normans, and called in the assistance of the Welsh.' It was after this that Shrewsbury was burnt—as mentioned at the end of the last chapter—and then, when this rebellion was crushed and trod out, William, who had determined to do away 'with the high-sounding and invidious title of Earl of Mercia, conferred the earldom of Shrewsbury upon his kinsman, Roger de Montgomery, Viscount of Ozyme (now Hicsines), who, having just visited England for the first time, in the train of his sovereign, had recently been gratified with the earldoms of Chichester and Arundel.'

Thus we see that Roger de Montgomery was not at the battle of Hastings, or, as Ordericus always terms it 'Senlac.' The fact is that, as a relative on whom William could entirely trust, he had remained in Normandy with the Duchess Matilda to protect and guard its interests during the Conqueror's absence; and for this he received no mean reward when the lands of the Saxons were divided into baronies, and, the royal demesnes excepted, were distributed amongst those who chiefly contributed, one way or another, by counsel and advice or by arms, to the Conquest; for out of the 406 manors into which Shropshire was divided Roger de Montgomery had all but forty-nine. In the words of the historian so often referred to, 'his remuneration was equal to the importance of his services; none of the Conqueror's followers reaped a larger share of territory. To the earldoms of Arundel and Chichester, with large possessions at Cilgarran, in Pembrokeshire, and elsewhere, was added a grant of the town of Shrewsbury, the entire earldom, and all the demesne of the Saxon monarchs, with certain manors thereunto appertaining, producing a revenue equal in effect to at least 60,000*l.* at the

present day; besides which he enjoyed the feudal supremacy of nearly the whole of Shropshire, which he parcelled out among his own dependants, and had permission to seize all the territory which he could win from the Welsh by the sword.' Ordericus thus records the donation of Salop under the year 1070: 'King William gave to Roger de Montgomery, first, the Castle of Arundel and city of Chichester, to which he afterwards added the county of Scrobesbury, which is placed on a hill above the river Severn. This earl was wise and moderate, and a lover of justice, and delighted in the company of wise and modest persons. He long retained in his service three wise clerks—Godebald, Odelerius, and Herbert—by whose sage advice he directed his measures. To Warin the Bald, a man of low stature, but lofty courage, he gave Aimeria, his niece, and the government (*præsidatum*) of Scrobesbury. By this Warin he bravely repulsed the Welsh and his other foes, and quieted the whole province committed to him. He set over his county William, surnamed Pantulf, Picold, Corbat, with his sons Roger and Robert, and other faithful and valiant men, by whose abilities and courage being kindly assisted he flourished greatly among the greatest nobles.'

Such was Roger de Montgomery, Earl, not only of Shrewsbury, but of the county also of which Shrewsbury was the capital; a very great man in his day, and hardly to be compared with those to whom the Conqueror gave the Isle of Wight, or Hereford, or Chester; scarcely even with the celebrated Waltheof, to whom he presented the county of Northampton. As for the poor Saxons, deprived of their manorial rights, and reduced almost to penury—

> Exedere animum dolor iraque demens,
> Et quæ non gravior mortalibus addita cura
> Spes, ubi longa venit.

And I must stop here in passing to observe how sacred a thing is law and liberty, and how ready a large Court is always to overthrow them. Who would have thought that this should have occurred afresh under William III., and that his Dutch favourites should have been as willing to swallow down estates as were the Normans? Yet so it is; and it is a

curious passage in the posthumous volume of Lord Macaulay's 'History' relative to the royal devise of estates. A demurrer had been put in, and a Portland was obliged 'to content himself with ten or twelve manors scattered over various counties from Cumberland to Sussex.' On which it is added: 'It seems therefore clear that our princes were, by the law of the land, competent to do what they would with their hereditary estates. It was perfectly true that the law was defective, and that the profusion with which mansions, abbeys, chaces, warrens, beds of ore, whole streets, whole market towns had been bestowed on courtiers was greatly to be lamented. Nothing could have been more proper than to pass a prospective statute tying up in strict entail the little which still remained of the Crown property. But to annul by a retrospective statute patents which in Westminster Hall were held to be legally valid would have been simply robbery. Such robbery must necessarily make all property insecure; and a statesman must be shortsighted indeed who imagines that what makes property insecure can really make society prosperous.'

It is true that what is referred to in the above extract is different in phases, and appearance, and in the persons referred to; but whether we look to prince or peasant, the transgression of the law must never readily be succumbed to. When it is, the result is tyranny, oppression, and misery. Individuals will never be long in a right position when a sovereign is allowed to do wrong. At the same time one could willingly acquiesce in the saying—

> Fallitur egregiè quisquis sub principe credit
> Servitium. Nunquam libertas gratior exstat
> Quam sub rege pio.

There is no doubt whatever that the servile subjection of the Saxon was the object and intent of William the Conqueror. Without it that name would be only a name. And hence, whilst in Saxon time the 'earl' was the highest title of honour, and he sat with the king as associate in council, under the Norman it was not so; for, although he granted this dignity to his nobles in fee, yet he all the while looked upon all power

as centred in himself and emanating from his own person. *Le roy le veult* was his motto, and if his wish was not attended to, his power stepped in, and the classical reader may safely apply the lines of Juvenal to mark what occurred day after day :—

> Pone crucem servo : meruit quo crimine servus
> Supplicium ? Quis testis adest ? Quis detulit ? Audi,
> Nulla unquam de morte hominis cunctatio longa est.
> O demens, ita servus homo est ? Nil fecerit, esto :
> Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas.

It is hardly necessary to add that the nobles followed the example of their king and lord ; and if he was tyrannical, so were they. The matter resolved itself into this—the Norman thought every man was either a noble or a serf, and hence it came about that after the time of the Conquest, for a long, long while, it was in this land, as in Hungary or in Russia, within our own recollection or within that of our fathers : the noble 'could command the services of the peasant without thinking of payment,' or he could shut himself up in his castle and defy the world around him.

But having spoken of the state of Shropshire at the time of the Conquest, a word must now be said of the state of Shrewsbury ; and this cannot be better done than in the commencing work of 'Domesday,' which I give from the introductory translation of Mr. Basevi Sanders, to be found in the beautiful photo-zincographed facsimile of that most interesting survey :—

'In the city of Shrewsbury, in the time of King Edward, there were two hundred and fifty-two houses, and as many burgesses in those houses, rendering yearly seven pounds sixteen shillings and eight pence gable. King Edward had these under written customs there. If anyone knowingly infringed the king's peace given with the king's own hand, he became an outlaw. But he who infringed the king's peace given by the sheriff paid one hundred shillings, who committed forestel or heinfare. King Edward had these three forfeitures all over England over and above the farms. When the king lay in the city twelve men of the best estate in the city served him as sentinels. And when he went a-hunting

these, the highest burgesses, mounted on horseback and armed, guarded him in like manner. The sheriff, however, sent thirty-six footmen to the stalking as long as the king was there. But at the park of Mersetelic he furnished thirty-six men by custom for eight days. When the sheriff wished to march into Wales, whoever failed to do so, after having been commanded by him, forfeited forty shillings.'

Such, from documents entirely to be relied upon, was the state of Shropshire and of Shrewsbury at the time of and shortly after the Conquest.

On inquiring of my Talking Friend if he had heard his time-honoured father make any remarks on the state of the county or the town about this time, he replied that he could not accurately 'put the axe in the helve,' by which he meant he could not readily resolve my doubts; but he added that he had frequently heard him say that bands and troops constantly passed through the valley of the Rea on the behests of Roger de Montgomery, and that many a time and oft they had rested beneath his shade. As now, so then, it was the shortest way to that district of which Montgomery is now the capital. The town, however, of that name he declared to be neither British nor Saxon, but Norman. It was the Welsh who chose to give it the name of Trê-Valdwyn; whether to flatter the Earl or themselves is doubtful. He always maintained that there was a good deal of what might be called sharp practice amongst the Cymry as well as prudent foresight; and when it was quite clear they could not conquer they would so yield as to make fair terms for themselves. The consequence was that after a while they began to talk of Roger de Montgomery as a very great man and as their fast friend. Notwithstanding all this, they were ready to burn the town and the Castle of Shrewsbury, though on their way, whether towards Montgomery or towards Dygon and Cefn Digoll (that is, probably, the Breidden and the Long Mountain), their sharp little eyes twinkled under the influence of the Cwrw Anwythig, or what we should now call Shrewsbury ale.

As for *Montgomery* itself, the words of 'Domesday' are decisive: '*Ipse comes construxit castrum, Montgumeri vocatum*,' called after their hill fortress of Montgomery, in the diocese

of Lisieux. Earl Roger died July 27, 1093. Two years afterwards the Welsh took it by storm and put the garrison to death. 'Florence of Worcester' (continues Mr. Eyton), 'whose authority is paramount on this matter, designates the garrison as "the men of Hugh, Earl of Shrewsbury." The expression is important, for it proves that the said Earl still held the castle in demesne. To revenge this insult King William II. undertook a Welsh expedition in October 1095, and the result was "a heavy loss in men and horses." The English host, according to one authority, penetrated as far as Snowdon and commenced a retreat about All Saints' Day.'

Thus we see that the Welsh were as ready to sack Montgomery in 1095 as they had been to burn Shrewsbury in 1069. This burning of the castle the time-honoured Old Oak very well remembered, for troops in the service of the 'Red King,' as he called William Rufus, hurried this way to its relief. He particularly recollected a man by the name of Dolphin, who broke his leg between the Lea and Pontesbury, and as he could not go forward with his fellows he was left behind in care of the Saxon holder at Cruck Meole. It is remarkable that the name remained in the neighbourhood for many centuries. Within a century, my Talking Friend told me, they migrated to the parish of Westbury, and when I was a boy a veritable Dolphin (as I recollect, he was a butcher) lived at the Marsh, in that parish, not far off from the 'Halfway House,' on the Welsh post-road. Whether any of the family remain I know not. He was an elderly man in my childhood.

Age on his hairs the winter snow had spread.

But as the Old Oak would speak constantly of Montgomery as connected with the Earl Roger, I may as well add here, on the same authority, that 'it is agreed on all hands that Montgomery Castle was rebuilt by the English; but whether by King William or Earl Hugh is not quite clear. Certain it seems that on the fall of Earl Robert de Belesme (in 1102) King Henry I., having the chastellany of Montgomery as an escheat, augmented it largely with distant estates and granted to Baldwin de Bokers, in marriage with Sibil

de Faleise, his niece. It was with reference to Baldwin de Bokers, and his seizin of Montgomery, that the Welsh called the place Trê-Valdwyn—i.e. the town of Baldwin.' He has occurred 'to my notice,' adds Mr. Eyton, 'in only one specific instance, and that is when, in the year 1121, as *Baldwin de Bokers*, he affixed his signature and attestation to Henry I.'s great charter to Shrewsbury Abbey.'

To the above it may be added that King John probably maintained Montgomery in his own hands. In the time of Henry III. 'a new castle' is mentioned there, proving that Henry III.'s castle was a new structure. 'Whether,' says Mr. Eyton, 'it was built on the site of the old castle is a question for the local antiquary. I believe that Baldwin's castle has been assigned to quite a different situation.'

As connected with the Welsh and with the Old Oak's remarks on the Cymry generally, it should be stated yet further that 'on Thursday, September 29, 1267, Montgomery became the scene of one of those empty negotiations which characterise the international diplomacy of England and Wales. Henry (*i.e.* Henry III.) was there, and, in the presence of Cardinal Ottoboni, he received the homage and fealty of Llewellyn, whom he at the same time acknowledged the Prince of Wales.' But all this belongs to a later page of history.

There was another way in which the Old Oak was possessed of information relative to Montgomery, and it was through the priest of Pontesbury, who was a great friend of an early prior of Chirbury, whose name has escaped me. The fact is that in early days the parson of Montgomery was a presentee of the prior of Chirbury, and his benefice was but a chapelry, an affiliation of the great parish church of St. Michael there. In after years it became independent of Chirbury; and one William de Brun was known both to the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury. He was presented to Chirbury by King Henry III. by patent, addressed to the Archdeacon of Salop. But it is unnecessary here to say more about Montgomery. What has been said in an earlier chapter, coupled with what is said in this, will show how the Old Oak would necessarily know a good deal about the matter.

All that went to Montgomery by the valley of the Rea must pass under his branches and cross the little runlet by his side.

But that Old Oak had been long ago gathered to his fathers. My Talking Friend even shows now great marks of age, albeit his memory is but slightly impaired; and as I looked up to his wide-spreading boughs, and rejoiced me in his hospitable shade, I called to mind some words I had recently been reading—'In these days we are surrounded by noise and excitement; everywhere is haste and its accompanying confusion. It matters not what we do, the fever of competition ever rages. We travel as though we were flying from ourselves. We write the history of things before they are accomplished, and the lives of men before they are dead. Surely there is some profit to be found in coming to a quiet village like this, if it will only give me some glimpses of a life which stands out in such strange contrast to our own.'

Meanwhile we pass on from the lovely valley of the Rea, and from Hanwood—once one of the most picturesque villages in the county—and from the old homestead of Cruck Meole—the delight of the venerable Oak and of my Talking Friend—to recount a little of what they knew of Shrewsbury.

On inquiring what was the state of the town when the time-honoured Oak spoke of its earliest days, within his own recollection, as collected from the conversation of travellers, my Talking Friend assured me at once that it was very different from all modern towns, and that there were within the circuit of it large spaces which were not built upon, and that in time of war and difficulty the fruits of the earth were brought in and stowed away in places of safety; from which it appears that like Oriental cities of old, such as were Nineveh or Babylon, Shrewsbury had *opens* in which, in all probability, a good deal of cultivation went on.

The oldest portions of the town have been mentioned in a former chapter. It increased by degrees, but for many years, though the chief town of Sciropesberic, it was but weak in comparison with modern towns: and it has been

said that the 250 burgesses in the time of the Confessor, if each of them, on an average, had a wife and three children, will not give a population of more than 1,250 souls. Not an inconsiderable addition may be made to these figures by counting in those who sought protection within the walls incomplete.

The Old Oak's information relative to the character of the old town was very considerable, and all derived, of course, from his friends the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury. He mentioned, as of very ancient date, those of St. Alkmund, St. Julian, St. Chad, and St. Mary; and his information on the point is corroborated by 'Domesday.' But the great delight of the priest of Hanwood was in the little wee church *in the wych of the Biforet*: by which he meant the small wooden church which preceded the abbey in the village *before the gate*. To this it is, no doubt, that the words of 'Domesday' apply: '*In Sciropesberic civitate facit Rogerius comes abbatiam, et ci dedit monasterium Sancti Petri, ubi erat Parochia civitatis.*'

Of this little church, before the Conquest, one Siward was the priest, if not the founder, and it appears to have been very small and of wood, like very many of the Saxon churches. But what gives so much interest to this foundation in the East Foregate is that Odelerius was its subsequent incumbent—the father of the celebrated historian Ordericus Vitalis: called Ordericus, after the priest of Atcham, on the banks of the Severn, who baptised him, and Vitalis because he took upon him the vow of St. Benedict on that saint's day.

Very interesting is all that can be picked up of this early historian, for which the reader is referred to Archdeacon Owen's early history, and to the later one which he completed with the assistance of Blakeway and Rowlands; certainly one of the best of its kind, to which and to Mr. Eyton's 'Antiquities of Shropshire' these pages are so greatly indebted.

Another cause there was why the Old Oak took so great an interest in all that he heard the priest of Hanwood say of the little wooden church of St. Peter in the East Foregate; and it was this. The Rea, which flowed not far from his

own locality, was the identical stream '*Mole*,' or *Meole Brook*, which washed the sides, and supplied the fishponds, of the afterwards so celebrated abbey, founded by Roger de Montgomery, the friend and patron of Ordericus Vitalis.

Many a visit of the priest of Hanwood to the earlier Saxon monastery as well as to the little wooden church in the East Foregate could the venerable Oak recount; and, as it seemed to him, the priest of Hanwood and the priest of Pontesbury, when they happened to be good men, as so many of them were, were always refreshed by a visit to the town of Scrobbesbyrig; and it was pleasant to see the walls which were washed by their own waters of the Rea, and to eat of the same trout from the stews which their own friendly lords had helped to replenish. It was in much later days that carp were introduced there. The common fish in the well-known park were trout, roach, and chub. Pike they had, but it was from other sources. They were too voracious to be kept in the stew; and they wished they could have kept it clear of eels, which are scarcely less so.

Churchyard, like the time-honoured Oak, had no mean opinion of the walls of Scrobbesbyrig, nor of the castle, nor of the abbey where he wrote—

> Who hath desires to view both hill and vale,
> Walke up old walle of castle rude and bare,
> And he shall see such pleasure set to sale,
> In kindly sorte, as though some merchant's ware
> Were set in shop to please the passer by;
> Or els by shewe beguyld the gazer's eye:
> For look but downe, along the pleasant coast,
> And he shall think his labour is not lost.
>
> One way appears Stonebridge and Subbarbs there,
> Which called is the Abbey Forehed yet:
> A long great streate, well builded large and fayre,
> In as good ayre as may be wisht with wit:
> Where abbey stands, and is such ring of belles,
> As is not found from London unto Welles;
> The steeple yet a gracious pardon findes
> To bide all blastes, all wethers, stormes, and windes.

But having spoken of the little wooden church in the East Foregate as the forerunner of the lordly Norman abbey,

it is not out of place to call to mind the fact that in early days such fragile fabrics were common. Indeed, on the coming in of the Norman most of our churches were of wood, with stone or flint, as it might be in some cases, for foundations, and now and then a rough rubbled wall. The name remained for long on the old Anglo-Saxon word *getimbrian*, which meant to build generally, whatever the material might be. Very possibly the Caen quarries—even yet used and referred to as used in these days—gave the first impulse to stone architecture on this side the Channel. *Basilica lignea* is a term still to be met with in old documents. 'So in the year 1050,' to quote the words of Staveley, 'Simeon Dunelmensis tells us how Egelrick, Bishop of Durham, had a mind to pull down the church of *Cunecester*, that was built of wood, with intent to build a better of stone to the memory of St. Cuthbert, buried there; and as he was digging for the foundation he found a great treasure hidden in the place. And it was not long after the Norman's coming that a merciless fire happened in Cambridge, which burnt not only the greatest part of the town, but most of the churches also, they being built of wood.' It was in after days, when the priesthood neglected their high calling, that the people said, '*Ecclesia aurea, ligneus sacerdos*;' or, in the words of Boniface, '*Quondam sacerdotes aurei ligneis calicibus utebantur; nunc a contrario ligneis sacerdotes aureis utuntur calicibus.*' As Longfellow puts it in the 'Golden Legend'—

> In the days of old,
> The days of old,
> Crozier of wood
> And bishop of gold.

And the reader may turn to what Dean Stanley says of the 'rough sackcloth of the founder,' and the 'wooden chalice' in the Troitska Monastery, compared with its after gorgeousness and magnificence.

As far as I learn, only one remnant of a wooden Saxon church is still in existence, and that is at Greenstead Ongar, in Essex, close to Chipping Ongar. The following account of it is from Lewis' 'Topographical Dictionary': 'The nave, or body of the church, which is extremely curious, is com-

posed of the half-trunks of chestnut trees, about a foot and a half in diameter, split through the centre and roughly hewn at each end to let them into a sill at the bottom, and into a plank at the top, where they are fastened by wooden pegs: it is 29 feet 9 inches long by 14 feet wide, and 5½ feet high at the sides, which supported the primitive roof, and is supposed to have been erected, about 1013, as a shrine for the reception of the corpse of St. Edmund on being conveyed back from London to *Beodrics Worthe*, or Bury, whence it had been carried away in 1010 by Bishop Arlwin in consequence of the invasion of the Danes under Turketel.'

The godfathers and the godmothers who 'vowed' for the child—that is to say, in old Saxon, answered for the child at the font in those days, and in those old wooden churches—did so in earnest. *There* they saw and felt the Saviour's power, and to them 'soft mercy's undersong' was everything.

> Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,
> The place where man his God shall meet,
> Be sure, is holy ground.

What well-languaged Daniel says in his 'Life and Reign of William I.' refers to a somewhat later period. 'Now the English began to despise their little homely cottages, and to build themselves stately houses, magnificent churches and monasteries, to provide neat and good furniture, and to erect castles and towers after the Norman fashion.' True it is, to a certain extent; but it is more exact what he says in an after page, and towards the end of William's days, of whom he says: 'He that conquered others was a captive to Lanfranc's goodness, who to raise devotion among all sorts did what possibly he could to furnish his church with the most exquisite ornaments he could procure, caused religious houses to be built with greater convenience and state, and began the founding of hospitals.' But an allusion to this has been made before.

I may add, in concluding these remarks on our old wooden churches that in all probability the passage following, from Stow's 'Survey of London,' presupposes a *timbrung*, or *getimbrung*—that is a previous wooden structure. 'At the

upper end of Hower Lane, toward Westcheape, is the fair parish church of St. Mary Bow. This church, in the reign of William Conqueror, being the first in the city built on arches of stone, was therefore called New Marie Church, of St. Marie de Arcubus, or Le Bow, in West Cheaping; as Stratford Bridge, being the first built (by Mathilda the Queen, wife to Henry I.), was called Stratford-le-Bow: which names to the said church and bridge remaineth till this day.' Many a time and oft in ancient days did the people worship in their wooden churches with a holy worship—an event as such things are. Read the passage following from Dr. Christopher Wordsworth's 'Tour in Italy': 'Near the cathedral (at Lucerne) is a cloister and cemetery filled with monuments; and still further up the hill is a large enclosed burial-ground for the Roman Catholic population, and another small one, with a very plain *wooden temple-like chapel*, for Protestants, with the words "Gott ist Liebe" inscribed over the door. Near it is a beautiful view of the city and the lake.'

But to pass onwards to a very different subject on which the time-honoured Oak delighted to dwell—the stand, I mean, which every now and then some noble-minded Saxon would make against the Norman for his country's rights. Several, he said, there were in the county of Sciropesberic, but, as no one has recorded their history, their names are past and gone. Two or three names my Talking Friend said he could recollect his father mentioning—such as were Eimar, Uluric, Leimer, Uctatel—but called to mind none of their attempts or feats of arms. All that I can add is that these names do certainly occur as Saxon owners in 'Domesday' in the time of Edward the Confessor. The scholar will naturally call to mind the stanza of Horace or these parallel lines of Ovid :—

> Carmine fit vivax virtus; expersque sepulchri,
> Notitiam seræ posteritatis habet.
> Tabida consumit ferrum lapidemque vetustas;
> Nullaque res majus tempore robur habet.
> Scripta ferunt annos: scriptis Agamemnona nôsti;
> Et quisquis contrà, vel simul arma tulit.

One name, however, there was which rung all over England, and reached the banks of the Severn, and was constantly

in the mouths of the subject Saxons—and that was the name of Hereward, the greatest opponent of the Conqueror.

> A stripling's arm
> May raise the kingly standard in its pomp
> To play with zephyrs under cloudless skies ;
> But when the rude storm shakes its ponderous folds,
> Twere hard for less than the consummate man
> Aloft to bear it, yet unstooping.

And such was Hereward, of whom the monks of St. Peter's talked, and of whom the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury discoursed beneath the Old Oak's shade. The remarkable features of his life are recorded by Ingulph, the Conqueror's own secretary, and may be repeated briefly here. A dozen such heroes in each county could have given William's lordly nominees some trouble, even as, according to the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' A.D. 1071, he did the king himself, when the ancients of the land were driven from their homes, and had only to lay them down and die.

> 'T is a movinge thinge to see the teares
> Wrung out frae an agedde eye,
> Seldome and slowe, like the scantye dropps
> Of a fountaine that 's neare a drye ;
> 'Tis a sorry sight to see graye haires
> Broght downe to the grave with sorrowe.

According to Ingulph, he was the son of Leofric, Lord of Brunne, in Lincolnshire, and a relative of the great Earl of Hereford, who had married Edward the Confessor's sister. He was tall and handsome, but rash and bold, even to fierceness, insomuch that his own companions were constrained to lay their complaints before his father, who, himself tried beyond all forbearance, represented the case to Edward, and acquiesced in his banishment. Three or four centuries later he would probably have had the name 'Devil' applied to him —a term given by our forefathers to one possessed with sheer and arrant mischief.

Banished from his own home, he fled to Northumbria, and thence to Cornwall, Ireland, and Flanders, where, having made his name as illustrious as at home, he married a noble lady, Turfrida. Meanwhile it became known to his friends

and relatives in England that his bravery and prowess had no equal, and, being jealous of his absence, they wished him back again; and what they wished was soon brought about by Norman excesses in England.

In drawing this chapter to a close it should be remarked that many questions of much interest might be started at this juncture. For instance, as to whether feudal tenures were known before the Conquest, which Sir Henry Spelman thought were not; and to investigate which we should have to enter again on the old terms *boc*land and *folk*land mentioned in an earlier chapter: but there is no space left for such inquiries, nor yet for that very interesting one touching the *socmen* of 'Domesday.' 'The last,' writes Hallam, 'of a noble plant, the free socage tenants, or English yeomanry, whose independence has stamped with peculiar features both our constitution and our national character.' Their good name still remains, and long may it remain! Let no one ask with ignorant scorn—

Spring crestless yeomen from so deep a root?

One point more must be touched upon, by way of summary. It is very clear from what has been said that all the Old Oak's predilections, and, indeed, those of my Talking Friend also, were on the side of the Saxons, and the name of Hereward was to them a name which always touched a hidden spring of delight; and, as I said, many such heroes would have done much to uphold the Saxon cause. But it must be confessed that men of Hereward's stamp were few and far between, and the Saxon greatness was all but effete. 'The weak reigns of Ethelred and Edward'—though Ethelred probably was not so weak as he is represented to have been—'had rendered the government a mere oligarchy, and reduced the nobility into the state of retainers to a few leading houses, the representatives of which were every way unequal to meet such an enemy as the Duke of Normandy.' Such is the opinion of Hallam, and such was really the case. Even their own apologist was constrained to say, 'All the torpor, debility, and degradation of sensuality and sloth—without literature, arts, or laudable pursuits—and all the factions and vices of

a corrupted aristocracy and debased yet powerful clergy had enervated the Anglo-Saxon intellect, and were forbidding its improvement and palsying the operation of the wise institutions of Alfred and his forefathers.'

And thus it came about that after times had come to the worst they began to mend; but in a way and from a quarter that was least of all to be expected. To use and to apply the old Virgilian lines—

> Tu ne cede malis; sed contrà audentior ito,
> Quà tua te fortuna sinet. Via prima salutis,
> Quod minimè reris, Graiâ pandetur ab urbe.

The imperious Norman's hard domination awoke the Saxon liberty afresh, and the spirit of life seemed to enter into the dead palsy which had dulled and stupefied a noble and generous nation: and some old homilist might have applied the words of the Book of Job:—'*There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.*'

> Sic fortis Etruria crevit,
> Scilicet, et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.

I do not know that I can end this chapter with better words than the following, and with Saxon blood in my veins I may fairly do so:—

'It was an important peculiarity of the Norman Conquest that, though it changed the individual persons of the proprietary body of England, it left most of the civil institutions undestroyed or only new named. The witenagemot survived in the parliament. The earl, the alderman, the serf, and the freeman; the gerefa, or mayor; the shire gerefa or sheriff; the hundred and the wapentake; the county court; the elective franchises; the cities and burghs, and their various privileges; the former customs, tolls, and services—were all preserved. These were rights of the ancient aristocracy and of all its minute ramifications; too pleasing to the new lords of the soil and proprietary body, and too

generally useful not to be carefully retained. Hence it continued to be still an Anglo-Saxon country with a Norman sovereign, and a Norman nobility, clergy, and gentry, amidst Saxon franklins, yeomanry, burghers, and freemen.'

Nevertheless, and not without cause, the fears of the poor harried Saxon was great, and the watchman who was posted at the Radlitt, or the Red Cliff, above Plealey, declared that the Norman was coming, and that there were signs of fire on all the champaign between the Oaks and Shrewsbury. From that high ground now, some half mile from the Oaks, the traveller sees Shrewsbury in the distance, and its beautiful spires pointing heavenwards, and all between is a highly cultivated country ; but then the poor Saxon might have said, in his own tongue, what Ovid said in writing from Pontus :—

Aspera militiæ juvenis certamina fugi,
Nec nisi lusurâ movimus arma manu :
Nunc senior gladioque latus, scutoque sinistram
Canitiem galeæ subjicioque meam ;
Nam dedit e specula custos ubi signa tumultûs,
Induimus trepidâ protinus arma manu.

Some lines from a preceding epistle might tell what he saw in his dreams from that lovely spot, Longden Manor House.

CHAPTER XX.

GROWING IMPORTANCE OF SHREWSBURY.

I held on way to auncient Shrewsberie towne,
And so from horse, at lodging lighting downe,
I walkt the streates, and markt what came to view,
Found old things dead, as world were made anew.
CHURCHYARD'S *Worthiness of Wales*, p. 89.

The little bit of pen pasture land round each farm, enclosed by a low tier of wall, is called '*tun*,' a word still retained in rural districts of Scotland [and of England also] spelt 'toon' or 'town,' with the same sound and similar signification.—*Pen and Pencil Sketches of Faroe and Iceland*, p. 72.

To come by goods well won with honest trade,
And warely looke there was no havock made:
Such thriftie men doe dwell in Shrewsberie now
That all the towne is full of merchants throw.
CHURCHYARD, *Ibid.* p. 89.

'IN my younger days, when I called myself an oakling,' said my Talking Friend to me one day, 'my time-honoured father would constantly impress upon me the importance of your county town, in those times called Scrobbesbyrig, and by you softened into Shrewsbury, or Shrewsberie. He had noted it, he said, for many centuries in the only way an oak in his position could be said to notice it; that is, from the conversation of passers by.'

At first, in early days, as we have seen before, it was but scrub and bush, but its locality, and its lovely river, soon brought inhabitants to join the wild people who thronged its alder bushes—indeed, to contend with them for a dwelling-place—and the consequence was that as it grew into a town, in the days of the Cymry, many of the natives were displaced, and the Roman envied its position; and by and by, when Wroxeter was burnt with fire, and the Angles and the Jutes and the Saxons had come in, they too had a share in

its pleasant places ; and so successively, in their turn, the Danes and the Norse ; and last of all, as was seen in the preceding chapter, the imperious and lordly Norman.

As may be collected from an earlier portion of this work, the time-honoured Old Oak's acquaintance with Pengwerne, or, as it was afterwards called, Scrobbesbyrig, began in Saxon times; and he quite well recollected the period when the Saxons round about began to dignify it by the name of 'THE TOWN'—a word, as he signified to his son, my Talking Friend, which was much more confined in its meaning formerly than it is now. Indeed, amongst the natives of the north, including the Anglo-Saxons themselves, it implied generally the house, the household buildings, together with the enclosure and '*boosy*' pastures—the old Shropshire name for the field close to the house into which the cattle were turned for convenience.

On my inquiring of my Talking Friend if there was any market in those days which the country people frequented, he told me that, as might be expected, our Saxon forefathers had little to sell ; but there was from time immemorial a sort of a market in Shrewsbury, and what they could not get at 'the wakes,' which were also 'fairs,' they were in the habit of getting either at Shrewsbury or from the pedlars, or travelling merchants, who went from place to place, and were the general purveyors of news besides. The floats, or what we should now call barges, brought much goods to the 'Old Town'; but latterly, and after the Crusades, many pilgrims were pedlars, and there was a constant communication inland between the Abbeys of Shrewsbury and Wenlock—to say nothing of those of Haughmond, Lilleshal, and Buildwas. And my Talking Friend would add, 'It is remarkable how quickly news would spread!'

What was here remarked reminded me of what Bishop Heber said in writing to his friend Wilmot Horton from India, under March 1, 1824: 'After this you will be the less surprised to learn that the leading events of the late wars in Europe (particularly Buonaparte's victories) were often known, or at least rumoured, among the native merchants in Calcutta before Government received any accounts from England, or

that the suicide of an English minister (with the mistake, indeed, of its being Lord Liverpool instead of the Marquis of Londonderry) had become a topic of conversation in the "burrah bazaar" (the native exchange) for a fortnight before the arrival of any intelligence by the usual channels.' I may add that it was said the bazaars were in possession of the news about the battle of Waterloo a full week before it was known officially at headquarters.

But when my Talking Friend spoke of the quick transmission of news, all that he said was comparative. Now and then, no doubt, news would travel quickly, for the times, but usually, as Milton says, it stopped to bait, whether good or bad. And, as for the common matters of the country, they were recollected pretty much by striking occurrences. For instance, the time-honoured Oak well recollected the great earthquake of the year 1089, of which and of the very late season the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' speaks. 'Likewise,' says the ancient record, 'there happened over all England a great earthquake, on the third of the Ides of August (August 11). And it was a very backward year in corn and in fruits of every kind; so that many men reaped their corn about Martinmas (November 11) and yet later.' Great cause, said my Talking Friend, had his father to remember this year, for the country people did not wait for his acorns to fall, but beat them off his branches, thus destroying the Midsummer shoot, which on the oak is very important, because it interfered with the next year's growth considerably.

It was during the reign of Rufus that another piece of news spread like wildfire over the country, and was a matter of great interest to the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury: the news, that is, of the First Crusade, of which the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' says, under the year 1096, that 'in this year also, at Easter, there was a great excitement through all this nation, and many other nations, through Urban, who was called Pope, though he had nothing of the see of Rome. And numberless people, with wives and children, went in order that they might fight against the heathen nations.' On the whole, however, it was not this Crusade which so much concerned England, though the voice of Peter, the hermit of

Amiens, was heard from shore to shore. He was not one of whom it might be said with justice, however much of an enthusiast—

> A subtil craftsman fram'd him seemly arms,
> Forged in the shop of wrangling sophistry.

Although the time-honoured Oak had heard nothing about it, living inland as he did, yet within a year or two of this time occurred that marvellous sea flood which swallowed up Earl Godwin's lands, converting them into what are now called the Goodwin Sands. 'On St. Martin's Mass Day' (November 11), says the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' 'the sea flood sprang up to that degree, and did so much harm as no man remembered that it ever before did; and it was on the same day a new moon,' and so a spring tide. This was A.D. 1099. The curious reader may like to see the lines from the 'Mirror of Magistrates':—

> And that on earth my shame might never die,
> The sea's proud waves have overrun my lands,
> Which did of yore by Sandwich haven lie,
> Where now, bound up in Neptune's watery bands,
> They at this day are called *Godwin* sands,
> And since are made of pasture-springing ground,
> A dangerous gulf the seaman to confound.

These are the lines put into Earl Godwin's mouth, but he was no doubt guiltless of Alfred's death, and probably one of the ablest men of his day.

After the times of Rufus, or the Red King, as the Saxons called him, the Old Oak seemed to know very little, but my Talking Friend himself had heard that it was he who built the walls, at least, of the Tower of London, if not London Bridge; and that the Great Hall of Westminster was his work, built not of oak—at which he expressed great surprise—but of the choicest Spanish chestnut wood. It was in the year 1099 that 'at Pentecost he held his Court, for the first time, at his new building at Westminster' (so says the 'Saxon Chronicle'), 'and when he heard men say that the hall was too high and too great'—I copy the words as they stand in old Stow's Annals—'he answered and said,

"This hall is not big enough by one half, and is but a bed-chamber in comparison of that I mind to make;"' to which he adds, as from Matthew Paris, 'A diligent searcher might yet find out the foundation of the hall which he had purposed to build, stretching from the river of Thames even unto the common highway.'

The death of Rufus in the New Forest was in after years a very common subject of conversation, and the time-honoured Oak often heard it mooted by the guards which accompanied the court on their way to what 'Domesday' calls *ad parcum de Marsetelic*, or Marsetelic Park, which he constantly maintained to be Marsley, in the parish of Habberley, so that the hunters must necessarily pass his way. Some said it was accidental, some intentional; some said Sir Walter Tyrrel was a friend, some said he was a foe; but the usual conclusion was that it was *ominous* that the Red King should have perished in the New Forest, depopulated and unchurched by his father. But we must return to our own local history.

During this time the house of Montgomery still continued to hold its high place, owing the same fealty to the throne of the Conqueror as the Conqueror did to the throne of France for Normandy. But on the death of Rufus, and with the desire to set Robert Curthose on the throne of England, Robert de Belesme and his brothers, Roger and Arnulph, combined with other nobles to this intent. Of their defeat, and of the subsequent misfortunes of Robert de Belesme, of his capture and imprisonment 'in the Castle of Wareham,' as recorded in the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' under A.D. 1113, this is not the place to treat, as it belongs to the historian; but it may be said, in passing, that, wild as he was, and unprincipled as leader, he was one to compete with the craftiness of Henry, and one who would have said, 'I consider him but half a man who gives up everything for lost because a spoke has chanced to start in Fortune's wheel.' One might have applied to him the lines in Landor's 'Count Julian':—

> Wakeful he sits, and lonely, and unmoved,
> Beyond the arrows, views, or shouts of men;
> As oftentimes an eagle, ere the sun
> Throws o'er the varying earth his early ray,

Stands solitary, stands immovable,
Upon some highest cliff, and rolls his eye—
Clear, constant, unobservant, unabashed—
In the cold light above the dews of morn.

Such was the glede that I saw many, many years ago on the top of the rocks between Pont-Aberglaslyn and Tremadoc.

As has been alluded to before, the Abbey of Shrewsbury was founded by Roger de Montgomery, and as it stood upon Meole Brook, it was a foundation of which the Old Oak was likely to have heard much. The priest, indeed, that was at Hanwood in those days said he had often seen the gloves which Roger de Montgomery laid upon the altar of the abbey in confirmation of his gift of the whole suburb lying without the eastern gate.

The gloves are gone, but the abbey remains. And as I pass it on my yearly transit to visit the inheritance of my fathers, it is pleasant to think of Hooker's words: 'Of service to God the best words are they which continue longest, and for permanency what like donation, whereby things are unto Him for ever dedicated? That the ancient lands and livings of the Church were all in such sort given into the hands of God by the just lords and owners of them, that unto Him they passed over their whole interest and right therein, the form of sending the said donation, as yet extant, most plainly sheweth.' Pleasant is it to see the crumbling red sandstone still and, as the train rushes past, to think of bygone days. For many were they—such, for instance, as the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury—who went forth from the abbey to their *feld-kirks*, or chapels, to spread the glad tidings of the Gospel.

His cowl the good old priest put on,
Took his pik'd staff and sandal'd shoon,
And, like a palmer bent by eld,
O'er moss and moor his journey held.

These were the men who, when great darkness fell upon the land, did the country good service; and if some, as was afterwards said, rather served themselves than the people and their God, there were many whose hearts were in the right place.

Nor may we scorn, too proudly wise,
Your silent lessons, undescried
By all but lowly eyes.

The valley of the Rea had been blessed with many a good priest, and it was a great satisfaction to the Old Oak that they should have found shelter, whether from storm or heat, beneath the shadow of his boughs. As for those that neglected their duties, he only wished that the caterpillar might puncture them as it did his leaves, and that they might have to eat of the bitter oak-apple. He shook his leaves with a frenzied agitation when priests of the latter cast sought his protection, and my Talking Friend mentioned an old proverb of those days, in which it was said pithily, 'They were no more sib'd than sieve and riddle that grew both in a wood together.' I believe it is still retained in Cheshire. And, indeed, what Peterson wrote to Thomson is vastly true: 'If we are not to oblige one another, life becomes a paltry, selfish affair; a pitiful morsel in a corner.'

As connected with Meole Brook, and as a place beloved by the time-honoured Oak, a word or two must be said of the old abbey, within the precincts of which, in my boyhood, I spent so many happy days in the house of one now gathered to her rest, like so many more, whose memory is dear.

It seemed more like a place celestial
Than an earthly mansion, which shall away,
By long time and process, another day.

'Among the several Norman abbeys,' says Mr. Eyton, 'which are connected with the memory of Earl Roger of Montgomery, the house of St. Martin of Séez is most associated with Shropshire history. It was with Sagian monks that the Earl colonised his noble foundation of Shrewsbury; they were Sagian monks whom his son, Earl Roger de Poicteria, imported to organise the Lancaster Priory. The fate of the two houses was different. Shrewsbury became independent of and antagonistic to its parent. Lancaster remained subject to Séez for ages, and so suffered the fortune usual to alien priories. To which it is added in a note, '*Sagium, or Sai*, was a vill situated about two miles south-east

of Argentan, and about nine miles west of Oximum, or Exmes, the caput of Roger de Montgomery's vicomté. Sagium, or Séez, was about twelve miles south-east of Saiz.' For further information the reader is referred to the account of some alien priories, &c. published in 1779.

Thence came the monks Rainald and Frodo, who were to start this stately pile, and here in the East Foregate was it commenced, in the year A.D. 1083, on the ground of Siward, and in the place of the old wooden church before referred to. Here, too, it was—to the Monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul—that when the world was about to close upon him Earl Roger retired, as they used to do, one remarks,

> Who, to be sure of paradise,
> Dying, put on the weeds of Dominic,
> Or in Franciscan think to pass disguised.

In Earl Roger's case this was tolerably true, for, as the historians tell us from Ordericus, 'he had obtained from the Abbey of Clugni, in Burgundy, the kirtle' (or tunic) 'of St. Hugh,' which he occasionally wore. 'But as his disease increased, this precaution did not satisfy him; and, therefore, having obtained the permission of his countess to make the vow of celibacy, he was, on the 10th day of July, 1094, actually entered a monk of his own foundation, and received the tonsure. Three days after this transaction he expired, and was honourably interred, says Ordericus (from whom this account is taken), in the *new church* between the two altars: a situation which at that period not even his rank and munificence could have obtained for him if he had not been invested in the monastic garb.' And the poet said truly enough—

> So potent were the powers of Churchmen in those days.

It was on the day of his funeral that the titles of Wentnor and Yokelton were given by Roger, son of Corbeth, to the monks, in token of respect for his memory, all of which, as Yokelton was not far off from Cruck Meole, the Old Oak recollected very well. In my boyhood it was a very desolate place, and belonged to Westbury. It has now a church of

its own, to the very great advantage of the people; and the brooklet, as it runs by, makes sweet music.

Earl Roger was succeeded by his second son, Hugh the Red, who granted to the monks a tithe of all the venison of his forests in Shropshire, that of Wenlock excepted. All this, however, and the burden the abbot had to bear as a mitred abbot, on his becoming a tenant *in capite* by the forfeiture of Robert de Belesme, must be passed by for want of space. The mention, however, of Wenlock as excepted from paying tithe of venison—unless it means hunting in the woods of Milburga there—calls for a short notice; as in all probability, had not Wenlock had its Milburga, the Abbey of Shrewsbury would never have had its St. Winifrede.

Wenlock was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, religious houses in Shropshire, and was said to have been founded about A.D. 680 by St. Milburga, daughter of Merewald, niece of Wulphere, and granddaughter of Penda, kings of Mercia. Here she lived, and died, and was buried; and the fact of her burial there left attached a sort of sanctity to the spot. The original church seems to have been destroyed by the Danes—probably, Mr. Eyton says, at the time of their conquest of Mercia, about A.D. 874, to which he adds: 'The selection of the same spot by Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and his wife Godiva, though for a religious establishment of a very different character, was probably suggested by such popular traditions concerning the life and death of St. Milburga as had survived the disturbances of the century and a half which followed the Danish outrage.' Leofric's re-foundation must have been between 1017 and 1035, but it languished and decayed with the fortunes of his nation. Coupling William of Malmesbury and 'Domesday's' evidence together, 'we must conclude that during the gradual subjugation of the Saxon race the Church of St. Milburga was deserted, if not destroyed, while its possessions awaited the decree of the first Norman Earl of Shrewsbury. This will have been subsequent to A.D. 1071, when the forfeiture of Earls Morcar and Edwin, the grandsons of Earl Leofric, first placed Shropshire at the Conqueror's disposal.' On the Earl's taking possession of the old home, he seems to have at once determined to restore it; and this

he did, and settled there, says Owen, 'a reformed kind of Benedictines from the Abbey of Clugni, in Burgundy.' The year 1080 has been assigned as the date of the restoration or re-foundation by the Roman earl; and with much probability, for Wenlock was reputed to be a younger house than Lewes, in Sussex, which was originated in 1077-8, and an older than Shrewsbury, which was first designed in February 1083. So concludes the author of the 'Antiquities,' and Wenlock is always associated with St. Milburga.

Meanwhile years passed by, and days of darkness intervened, and superstitious vanities crept in; and as no house of repute amongst the religious was deemed complete without its relics, so Wenlock must not be behindhand; and accordingly in the erection of some of its buildings the tomb of Milburga was stumbled upon, and the odour of sanctity issued from it, and wonderful cures were wrought there, especially those of scrofulous disorders—so common in these early days, when cleanliness was hardly considered a virtue.

Hinc fessos penitus subrepsit in artus
Insidiosa quies, et pigræ oblivia vitæ.

Mr. Eyton adds: '*The translation* of her relics—that is, their removal to a spot in front of the high altar of the new church—took place on May 26, 1101'; and 'that day became a standing festival in the subsequent history of the priory. Many of the rents were made payable thereon, and many of its documents dated thereby.'

So much for St. Milburga, whose woods were excepted when Earl Hugh granted to the monks of Shrewsbury's abbey tithe in venison from all his Shropshire forests—no mean gift when forest history is considered.

But was the wind-swept Wenlock to have such a valuable possession, and was the Abbey of Shrewsbury, founded by the same great Earl, to be left in the lurch? Such a thing in these days could never answer. And therefore, as Wenlock had now the remains of Milburga—no matter whether her bones or her soil—it was time for Shrewsbury to have some relics of some sort; and so the religious looked out, and Winifrede proved handy. As the historians of Shrewsbury

put it, 'when we remember that only a few years before, not more than six or eight' (I am not sure that I can quite reconcile this date), 'the neighbouring Monastery of Wenlock had derived an immense accession of celebrity and wealth from the *accidental discovery* of the remains of St. Milburga, candour itself could scarcely avoid concluding that the translation of Winifrede was designed to act as a counterpoise to the invention of Milburga.' No doubt the abbot of the day thought otherwise.

> And though a voice from—he knew not where
> (For none beside him stood),
> Breathed in his very ear 'Beware!'
> In a tone might have froze his blood;
> He but cross'd himself as he glanc'd around,
> But faltered neither for sight nor sound,
> For he knew that his cause was good.

As for Saint Winifrede, she is said to have lived in the seventh century—thus coinciding with the date of St. Milburga—and to have been the daughter of a nobleman near Holywell (called by the Welsh Treffynnon, or the town of the wells), in Flintshire; whilst her mother was sister of Beuno, one of the great Welsh saints. But for the legend at large the reader must refer to the common story; as for the well, whence came the Saxon name *Welston*, if he only visits the spot, and has proper faith, he will find that her head, when cut off by Katuanus or Cadfun, the grandfather of Calwalladr, ceased to roll before it was reunited by St. Beuno.

Wonderful cures were said to be wrought at this 'sacred fount' and by those waters hard by where the beautiful chapel was afterwards erected by Margaret, Countess of Richmond, the mother of Henry VII. In allusion and reference to the fabulous Lives of St. Winifrede, Bishop Fleetwood remarks: 'The historians of her life, St. Elerius and Salopiensis, concluded that it would be an undertaking to swell volumes if they registered all wonders done at her shrine. They thought it sufficient to acquaint the reader that the blind, lepers, and other diseased persons were perfectly cured by drinking the water, or bathing themselves in the holy well. This became so famous that tender mothers

made no difficulty of casting their sickly children into the stream, which was a speedy cure. Such as lived at a great distance, and were tormented with agues, and hot burning fevers caused the water to be brought to them, and drank it off as a certain remedy to relieve them in their maladies. Those in very remote places used to put one of the little *bloody stones* which were taken out of the well into other spring water, and they were cured. 'Tis said that the virgin martyr herself prescribed the first use of this last remedy, who soon after her second death appearing to many who in dangerous distempers devoutly called upon her, she directed them for their speedy recovery to apply the water and stones of the well in the aforesaid manner. Such as had swellings or old sores bathed the part afflicted, and they found present relief.' So stands the legendary fiction.

No wonder then, impressed with the great benefit received from Milburga by the Abbey of Wenlock, that the monks of the Abbey of Shrewsbury were desirous that her remains should be transferred from the Church of St. Gwytherin, in Denbighshire, where she died and was buried, to the banks of the brooklet of Meole, and the Severn into which it ran, after traversing the then lovely valley of the Rea from Marton Pool downwards to Coleham.

From the sequel of the legend, to which the reader is referred to in the authors above quoted, it appears that the monks of the Abbey of Shrewsbury, assisted by the Prior of Chester, were too much for the simplicity of the Cymry of Gwytherin, and they contrived by various sleights to gain possession of the precious relic, as it is said, 'in the year of our Redemption eleven hundred thirty and eight'—though that date may be questionable—which, till a suitable shrine could be provided for it, was deposited on the altar of St. Giles—that old church in the eastern suburbs, called the lepers' church, which in my childhood I was taken to see as the most ancient of all the churches of this time-honoured old town, and where in the churchyard I touched with awe the old *plague basin*, into which all money was dropped and washed in holy water—sacred as the well of Winifrede—for purification.

Such are the legends of St. Milburga and St. Winifrede, which I have introduced here as illustrative of the times. Of the latter I will only add in Bishop Fleetwood's summary, 'Not only this city,' i.e. *civitas*, as applied to Shrewsbury, 'but likewise other parts of Great Britain became most tenderly devoted to the holy virgin martyr; which induced Henry, Archbishop of Canterbury, in a provincial synod of 1420, to appoint the Feast of St. Winifrede to be solemnly kept all over England, with an office of nine lessons, on the third day of November.' He gives the litanies of St. Winifrede on an after page.

It was from the offerings made at her shrine that the monks were enabled to purchase the far-famed bell of St. Winifrede and the ornament of the abbey tower, which remained long after the Dissolution till the year 1730, when it was broken and 'sold to Mr. Rudhall, the renowned bell-founder at Gloucester.' The two inscriptions on it were—on the upper part near the crown,

SANCTA WYNEFRIDA DEO NOS COMMENDARE MEMENTO
UT PIETATE SUÂ NOS SERVET AB HOSTE CONCENTO

and about the middle,

PROTEGE : PURA : PIA : QUOS CONGREGO : VIRGO : MARIA :

It was after turning over in my mind the curious legend of St. Winifrede that I asked my Talking Friend if his time-honoured father had ever said anything to him about the shrine at the abbey. His answer was, 'It was not till the days of the Normans that he ever heard anything about her; but in the times of the early abbots a great report of her sanctity was bruited abroad, and more than once the priest of Hanwood had told her story, as it was told to him, beneath his boughs to the wayfarers on the Rea side. And he would add—for he was a man of great piety—that he grieved for all lepers and cripples, and should rejoice to think that there was saving virtue in the waters of her holy well; but he was sure that they who strove to climb heavenwards upon their hands and upon their feet, as Jonathan did when he miraculously smote the Philistines' garrison, should find a Saviour and a Comforter.'

Whether or not the time-honoured Oak had any misgivings about St. Winifrede I cannot say, but it is certain that an eminent Welsh scholar maintained that there never was such a person, looking upon Wenefrida but as a *name*—*Gwenvrewy*, or *Membre-wy*—signifying *Albicollinus Frigidus*, or '*The White-hill Waters*.' The passage referred to by the historians of Shrewsbury will be found in my note on Hor. *Epist.* I. xv. 3, and I venture to transcribe it, as that edition is now rare: '*Joannes à Pennant, Salopiæ* (*sive Novi Veroconii*) *Abbas, primus fabellam istam ex ore vulgi depromptam consarcinavit, pro more rudioris sæculi, nescio quam Saxonico vocabulo Wenefridam, sive Divam, sive Nympham ausus est comminisci.*' And thus it is that the pleasant stories of our childhood come to nothing! One is almost constrained to say with Sir Philip Sidney, in the concluding paragraph of his beautiful 'Defence of Poetry,' 'But fie of such a but!'

Passing by the old Saxon institutions, which, as we have seen over and over again in these pages, were always on the side of liberty (notwithstanding the old inherent evil of slavery which was bound up with them), and in passing on to the times of the Conquest, we find that 'from the haughty character of the Norman barons' (I am using the words of May's 'Parliamentary Practice') 'and the helpless condition of a conquered people, it is probable that the commonalty as a class were not admitted into any share in the national councils until some time after the Conquest, but were bound by the acts of their feudal lords; and the Norman councils were formed of the spiritual lords, and mainly, if not exclusively, of the tenants-in-chief of the Crown, who held by military service.' What is said by Benedict Abbas of the great council held at Northampton by Henry II., A.D. 1176, and of the advice of his knights and men, is too vague to draw an inference from; but certainly the Magna Charta was a step in advance, and we begin to see our way.

'At length,' continues Sir Erskine May, 'in the 49th of Henry III. (A.D. 1265) writs were issued to the sheriffs by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, directing them to return two knights for each county, and two citizens and burgesses for every city and borough; and from this time may be clearly

dated the recognition of the commons as an estate of the realm in Parliament. It is true that they were not afterwards summoned without intermission; but there is evidence to prove that they were repeatedly assembled by Edward I., especially in the 11th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd years of his reign. Passing over less prominent records of the participation of the commons in the government, the statute of the 25th Edward I., "*De tallagio non concedendo*," must not be overlooked. It was there declared that "no tallage or aid shall be taken or levied by us or our heirs in our realm without the goodwill and assent of the archbishops, bishops, earls, barons, knights, burgesses, and other freemen of the land." This statute acknowledges the right of the commons to tax themselves, and a few years after a general power of legislation was also recognised as inherent in them. A statute was passed in the 15th of Edward II. (A.D. 1322) which declared that "the matters to be established for the estate of the king and his heirs, and for the estate of the realm, and of the people, should be treated, accorded, and established in Parliament by the king, and by the assent of the prelates, earls, and barons, and the commonalty of the realm, *according as had been before accustomed*." In reference to this statute Mr. Hallam justly observes "that it not only establishes by a legislative declaration the present constitution of Parliament, but it recognises it as already standing upon a custom of some length of time." It may be added, in conclusion, that during the reign of Edward III. the commons were regularly mentioned in the enacting part of the statutes, having been rarely mentioned there in previous reigns.'

The rebel Montfort—his name still remains at Montfort's Bridge—marched on Shrewsbury, and took possession of it, in 1264. It was after the convention of Lewes, when the king became his prisoner, that he summoned his so-called parliament. Still, though a step in advance, it was the work of a rebel, and it was 'far from the Earl's intention,' say the historians, 'that this parliament should really be so free as the words of the writ import. Those who clamour the loudest against the abuse of power have not always made the best use of it when it has come into their hands. During this

eclipse of the monarchy Shropshire adhered to the side of legitimate authority, and its sentiments were particularly manifested at the county election which took place in consequence of the writ above mentioned. Accordingly, in the parliament rolls, under the names of the four knights sent up for this county, is this note: "They were not fit, as Peter de Montfort sent word; i.e. they were not calculated to promote the designs of his party." ' So this parliament never met.

And this brings us to the parliament which did meet, and which has left its name and mark upon the history of the old town, and which, as the time-honoured Old Oak said, has been a subject of conversation ever since. The Cymry naturally would talk of it painfully, for they had reason; but with the remnant of the Saxon race, intermingling now with Norman blood, it was a constant subject of congratulation. Old liberties seemed reviving.

' The Welsh prince was sent to Shrewsbury, at which town, that no solemnity might be wanting to the trial, a parliament was summoned to meet September 30. The attendance was extremely full, except that the spiritual lords were not present,' having no votes in cases of blood. ' It was the first national convention in which the commons had any share *by legal authority*, for that summons by Montfort cannot be called such. Besides 110 earls and barons, there were two knights from each county, and two deputies from certain of the principal cities and towns of the kingdom—probably that they might witness the rigid justice of their monarch—so that Shrewsbury witnessed the earliest legitimate traces of that popular representation in the constitution to which, under God, Englishmen have been indebted for all their subsequent prosperity and all their energies for that noble independence and that national attachment to freedom which have ever since formed their distinguishing characteristics. The House of Lords is said to have sat in the castle, and the House of Commons in a barn belonging to the Abbot of Shrewsbury; but this is a tradition founded upon modern notions; wherever the commons sat, it was certainly in the same apartment as the lords, the three estates of the realm

not separating into two chambers till the reign of Edward III.' The Acton Burnell barn has been mentioned elsewhere.

Other parliaments may be mentioned or not, as it happens, but of this one it was thought right to make a special and particular mention ; and I bethought me of the lines in 'Gorboduc':—

> For nothing more may shake the common state
> Than sufferance of uproars without redress ;
> Whereby, how oft, kingdoms of mighty power
> After great conquests made, and flourishing
> In fame and wealth, have been to ruin brought.

'Even now,' said my Talking Friend, 'I can hear what was said many a time and oft by passers-by about this and other parliaments, and more than one priest of Hanwood in the days that are past has discussed such matters learnedly.' It pleased my Talking Friend to repeat his oft-said, 'We have had many learned priests and excellent men at Hanwood and Pontesbury!' And one in particular, some centuries past, he would speak of, almost in the words of Drayton, as—

> This justly named saint, this never-wearied man.

On my inquiring of my Talking Friend as to the habits of the people in the earlier days of the Norman rule, he told me that the report of his aged father was by no means a favourable one ; at the same time he had picked up from general conversation as wayfarers passed by, that it was pretty much as in other parts.

On my asking him about the position women held in those times, he told me that in the country the good housewife was a person of great repute always, for the comforts of a household depended upon the woman ; but that out of doors (whatever might be the case in cities and towns), especially if they had to ride in haste from place to place, as was sometimes required of them, whilst their husbands kept guard and toiled at home, women were hardly to be distinguished from men. And so it continued for a long period of years. And I called to mind how Camden had said, 'Queen Anne, wife to King Richard II., was the first who taught Englishwomen to ride

on side-saddles, when as heretofore they rode astride.' To which he adds, 'She brought in high head attire, piked with horns, and long trained gowns for women.' It is remarkable that the women of those days should have worn head attire like the Druses of the Lebanon. Perhaps the daughters of Zion, with stretched forth necks, did much the same.

As to the meals of the people, they were comparatively small matters, but on high days and festivals it then chanced to be better fare than usual: all were seated together at one board, above and below the salt. The last remnant of this pleasant footing was retained till the present century, when the yeoman and his men dined together, and the man knew his place as well as the good farmer knew his. Literally, too, the board was one, and I have seen in Shropshire several of those grand oak planks which served for a table set on trestles, such as I shall never see again. It takes me back to the days of my childhood.

It has been before hinted that the hall was the custom with the nobles of the land and men of high estate, though in Norman times there was the daïs, close upon which was the 'lady's bower,' or parlour, as we should now call it. We know from the history of Edgar and St. Dunstan that a similar arrangement existed even then; but in Norman days the line of demarcation was more defined. 'The hall,' said Selden, 'was the place where the great lord used to eat (wherefore else were the halls made so big?), where he saw all his tenants and servants about him. He ate not in private except in time of sickness; when once he became a thing cooped up, all his greatness was spoiled. Nay, the king himself used to eat in the hall, and his lords sat with him, and *then he understood men*;' which last words, not understood by George IV., I purposely put in Italics.

In our variable climate—in many respects the best climate in the world—the hall was always needed. It was seldom that great banquets could be held out of doors, though the green was kept cut close for the dance, or, as it might be, for skittles and bowls. Our climate, indeed, 'is not like the equable temperature of Honolulu, where the islanders have no word to express its variation; so *invisible* is the subject

of weather,' says Mr. Manley Hopkins in his interesting account of the Sandwich Islands. Had the weather been as fine here as it is there, the time-honoured Old Oak and his son, my Talking Friend, had never been the 'heart of oak' they were, nor would the people of the land have been the hardy, brave, and stalwart people they are; for climate has a good deal to do with national character; and a native of any of our northern isles is essentially different in all his ways from those whom the sun has touched more nearly, whether Spaniard, or Italian, or other. It is not unnatural for one amongst us to say of his fellow—

> Brave were his eyes, and frank his mien;
> Of all men's faces calm or keen,
> A better I have never seen
> In all my lonely wanderings.

'In my aged father's days,' said my Talking Friend to me very lately—it was just before the rail was begun upon, which, though it may open the resources of the Rea valley, has much marred its beauty—'there was very little locomotion.. A journey to Burg (the modern Bridgenorth) or to Wenlock, to see the shrine of St. Milburga, constituted a person a traveller. Indeed, there were many who had never journeyed further than Scrobbesbyrig'—as he could not help calling it continually, just as a native still says Brummagem for Birmingham, though he knows the latter to be stamped by use as the proper pronunciation of the word—'and yet these people, though untravelled, were thoroughly alive to the calls of their situation, and knew their duties well. You say, and, I make no doubt, truly, that travel opens the mind and expands the ideas; but after all many travel to little purpose, and I am not sure, from what I see going on at present, that you are much the wiser and much the better for your constant hurrying to and fro, and scarcely taking rest. And yet I have heard the priest say—and I liked to listen to his talk, it was so kindly—"*Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*"'

Evidently the present rapid movement was too fast for the staid sobriety of my Talking Friend, yet, had he weighed all the advantages which accrued to the district at large from

the passing and repassing that went on, he might have concluded that it had resulted in no small improvement. Some rubbish and heavy matter—a sort of moral *moraine*—must be left behind in the motion of great bodies, but after all motion is life. And yet there are plenty of people like to those of whom Justice Balance said, 'I have known a man as perfect as a chronologer as to the day and year of most important transactions, but to be altogether ignorant of the causes, springs, or consequences of any one thing of moment. I have known another acquire so much by travel as to tell you the names of most places in Europe, with their distance of miles, leagues, or hours, as punctually as a post-boy, but for anything else as ignorant as the horse that carries the mail.' And such things certainly are.

On another occasion I ventured to ask my Talking Friend whether within a century or two there had not been a visible improvement in the habits of the people generally; and whether, since travel had become more common, the custom of marriages *in and in*, and so propagating hereditary diseases, had not become less and less in the valley of the Rea. I had thought a good deal on this matter. I knew that formerly, not only in this county, but throughout all the counties in England, leprosy and cutaneous disorders generally had been very common. Want of cleanliness, no doubt, had contributed a good deal to this—perhaps also fish diet and salt meat, when the countryman was fortunate to get any meat at all, save what he trapped, and which, in old Norman speech, might be called his '*venatio*,' or his '*venery*.' I recollected, too, that St. Milburga and St. Winefrede had a name for such cases, not forgetting that her relics rested by the way at St. Giles', Sanctus Ægidius being the leper-saint, and all his hospitals being *extra portam*; nor did it pass me by that Sutton Spa, near Shrewsbury, of which I had drunk in my boyhood, had a great name in cutaneous attacks, being celebrated for the purifying of the blood, without which no skin can be fair and well-liking, without blemish and well-favoured, as Daniel's and the skin of the favoured children of the captivity.

Scarcely had I put the question to my Talking Friend,

and thought out the thought in my own mind, than I heard a great rustling in the Old Oak's top, and the agitation of his boughs and of his leaves was greater than I had heard on any other occasion, save when he bent under storm and tempest, as it rushed up the valley of the Rea from Habberley Hole, which in these parts, as has been remarked before in several parts of these pages, was the veritable cave of Æolus—

> Hic vasto rex Æolus antro
> Luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras
> Imperio premit, ac vinclis et carcere frænat.
> Illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis
> Circum claustra fremunt—

the mountain here being, as the local reader likes best, either Pontesford Hill or the Stiper Stones, or other of the abutting headlands of the district.

The fact was I had set my old friend a-thinking, and he presently replied, 'I think there is a good deal in what you say. Certainly I have heard my time-honoured father say that all the country round was "*sib*," by which he meant, as you very well know, *related*; but of late years there has been a great deal of new blood introduced—I might say, since the Hanoverian succession, though none of us in these parts meant anything kinsmanly by the expression, "*Go to Hanover.*" Still, from that time forth, our connections have been wider; and, whatever the cause, the health of the people has been stronger; nor has there been that old tendency to cutaneous disorders which was a sort of fretting-leprosy amongst us. I have likewise heard my time-honoured father refer on many occasions to the poor lepers, who were very common even in this open valley, and it was a puzzle to him; and, now I think of it, he would say that people with great blains and boils used the raddle from Radbrook and pitch from Pitchford. This they steeped in water and drank, and it was considered very efficacious.'

And I call to mind at once that, even to this day, old Molly Clayton, the last of the old servants of the household—who has served it night and day, and with such faithfulness and devotion as is rare now, for more than sixty years, girl and woman—still recommends raddle and pitch. That

of Pitchford, as far as I know, has ceased to coat the wall; but ploughman's-drops, so long in repute, were compounded with pitch, and creosote is prescribed every day by the ablest and best physicians. And so we may say with Lucretius:—

Omnia mutantur, nihil interit.

On referring to the enjoyments of the people, as illustrative of their habits in those early days, my Talking Friend told me that of these the old vigils, or wakes, which have been before noticed, were the chief. Besides these there were a fair or two, unconnected with the wakes, of which they generally formed a part. One in these parts, on the banks of the Rea, was well known by the term of 'Sloe Fair'—the sloe, like the crab, being one of our indigenous fruits. The name is not yet extinct, and the Sloe Fair of Chichester is still recognised, and even looked forward to by all old South-Saxons.

In those times the people looked forward, and many arrangements were made prospectively. They were, in fact, what in modern days would be called places for match-making; like as were those old cherry feasts in Worcestershire and Kent, which, however, were of later date. As such times of enjoyment seldom lasted long, they were eagerly caught at; and hence it is that, because they were so short-lived, old poets and moralists compared life generally to a cherry fair. Skelton, in his poem 'Of the Death of the noble Prince, Kynge Edward the Fourth,' seems to imply that, like other feasts, they did not always end happily:—

What is it to trust on mutabilyte,
Sith that in this world nothing may endure?
For now I am gone that late was in prosperyte:
To presume theruppon is but a vanyte,
Not certayne, but as a chery fayre full of wo.
Reygned not I of late in greate felycite?
Et ecce nunc in pulvere dormio.

One who wrote in the first decade of the present century expresses the same sentiment in different words, for which he had a Latin poet's authority:—

But joys, like flowers, too soon decay,
Too soon give place to sorrow;
And where a rose has blown to-day
You 'll find a thorn to-morrow.

Another time of feasting there was which the time-honoured Old Oak used to speak of constantly, and my Talking Friend well recollected parties on their way, as they rested beneath his boughs, recounting their anticipated pleasures. The feast he alluded to was St. Martin's-tide, November 11, still called by old Shropshire people Martinmas; that time after which our forefathers killed no more fresh meat—hams and bacons they did not call such—till spring.

'It was at this time,' said my Talking Friend, 'that Alfric of Panson invited his neighbour Hugh of Edge, and his good wife and his children, to the *mart*—i.e. to the Feast of the Martinmas Beeve—where they had their fill of black and white puddings—that favourite old Shropshire dish—and a goose, together with harvest beer and mead, and home-made wine, now first broached and tasted, and carefully to be bunged up again.' It was usually, as before hinted, a happy time—a stirrup glass, if one may say so, before the dark days of winter set in; for in those bush and forest days the winter was severely felt, and old Tusser's lines have more truth in them than dainty modern people suppose:—

> And Martinmas beef doth bear good tacke,
> When country folk do dainties lacke.

'It was upon one of these occasions,' continued my Talking Friend, 'that, after old Hugh of Edge had finished the dainties which his host had set before him, and had quaffed his beer and mead to the full, he turned to Alfric and said, "Neighbour Adulph is a goodish man in his way, but '*blood without groats is nothing!*'" by which he clearly implied that, although of good standing and of good extraction, his worldly wealth was small. That, at least,' said my Talking Friend, 'is the old meaning of the proverb, and geese and Martinmas beef always went together.' And I recollected some old lines—

> Ligna vehit, mactatque boves, et lætus ad ignem
> Ebria Martini festa November agit.
> Ad pastum in silvam porcos compellit, et ipse
> Rex gregis in terra vescitur anseribus.

Evidently there was something more intended than met the ear in my Talking Friend's remark, and on my referring

to the subject again he told me that by the next Martinmas-tide Alfric's only daughter, Tema, was married to the poor Adulph, and from that time forward all his affairs prospered, and he became one of the wealthiest men of the district, honoured and beloved by his neighbours. And the priest that was at Hanwood in those days said thoughtfully, '*Qui invenit mulierem bonam invenit bonum, et hauriet jucunditatem a Domino.*'

From further inquiries I found that Adulph's name and family remained long in the land. As far as I could make out, he must have lived at Nox or Nuneham, both of which are situated in the hundred of Ford, and at no great distance from the spot where my Talking Friend and his time-honoured father stood. It was always a pleasant thing to hear him talk of his neighbours; it showed the heart that was in him—true heart of oak—more pith than peel. At the same time, he always stuck to the truth, as may be seen from what follows.

I had heard very often that even in early days the whole of our land, and not this district only, as some say, was given up to boozing and tippling and deep cups, and that, to use old Saxon terms, the people at every feast were so *muddled and fuddled* that the horses which carried them there had more understanding than they. I had heard it reported, too, that this degrading habit of drinking was not either a Saxon or a Norman vice, but it was introduced to excess into England after our wars with what are called the Low Countries. And I called to mind the words in Camden's 'History of Queen Elizabeth,' in which, having spoken of a ridiculous duel between one Thomas, Captain of the Epirots and Sir Roger Williams, General Norris' lieutenant, who, without either of them receiving a wound, drank a hearty cup together, and so parted friends, the historian adds:—

'Yet this is not to be omitted that the English, who of all the northern nations had been till now the moderatest drinkers, and most commended for their sobriety, seemed in these Netherland wars first to drown themselves with immoderate drinking, and by drinking others' healths to impair their own. And ever since, the vice of drunkenness hath so

diffused itself over the whole nation that in our days first it was fain to be restrained by severe laws.'

Then again I called to mind many passages in our dramatic poets, which look the same way, notwithstanding that in Hamlet's holding 'the rouse' seems particularly applied to the Danes; for instance, and to let one quotation serve for all, the lines which follow, from Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Captain':—

Piso. It will
Be hard to be done, in my opinion,
Unless we light upon an Englishman
With sevenscore surfeits in him.
Lodovico. Are the Englishmen
Such stubborn drinkers?
Piso. Not a leak at sea
Can suck more liquor: you shall have their children
Christen'd in mull'd sack, and, at five years old,
Able to knock a Dane down. Take an Englishman,
And cry 'St. George!' and give him but a rasher,
And you shall have him upon even terms
Defy a hogshead.

Certainly it is not altogether pleasant or flattering to one verily to think that all this may be brought home to us; but I assume it may, and on putting the question to my Talking Friend he said that it certainly might, for his time-honoured father had told him over and over again that all the people who lived on the banks of the Rea would drink all they could get, and whenever they could get it. And he used to recount an anecdote of bygone days in which one of the earliest holders of the '*tun*,' or cultivated ground around the old homestead at Cruck Meole, said to his cattle on bringing them down to drink at the Rea, '*Gif yo binna thurstig, ic bin*': words in which we may observe the Anglo-Saxon melting into more modern English, combining something of the Jute's tongue likewise, and possibly a slight intermixture of the Frisian, for which I must refer all linguists to my lamented friend Professor Rask's 'Frisisk Sproglære,' published at Copenhagen in the year 1825—one of those extraordinary linguists, like Mezzofanti, with the gift of tongues, as modest withal as the great librarian of

Milan, who only said of himself, '*Non sono dotto; non conosco che parole.*'

Amongst other illustrations of the habit of tippling in early times my Talking Friend referred me to what is recorded of Edgar—how he ordained 'drinking measures by public proclamation, driving certain nails into the sides of their cups as to limits and bounds, which no man, upon great pain, should be so hardy as to transgress'—so by his regal authority constituting himself a Greekish *οἰνόπτης*, *potandi arbiter*, or cup censor; 'for it is not sufferable in a Christian countrie that men should thus labour with great contention, and strive for the maistrie (as it were) to offend God, in so wilful waste of His gracious benefits,' as old Lambarde puts it in his 'Perambulation of Kent.'

And this led me to put two and two together, according to Cocker, and I was forced to remember that there were many canons which prohibited drinking, and that, too, in speaking of the priesthood. And I said, if such prohibitions were necessary to keep the '*clerici*' within bounds, lay and borrel men, clad in coarse cloth and fustian, would much need looking after. And, indeed, my Talking Friend had told me more than once that the intemperate habits of the people had been a sore trouble of heart to that priest of Hanwood, whom he seemed to respect above all others for his great simplicity and integrity of purpose, hinting, at the same time, that there had been others there who had drunk as deep as the people.

In turning to Johnson's 'Collection of the Laws and Canons of the Church of England,' from its first foundation to the Conquest, and from the Conquest to the reign of Henry VIII., I at once lighted upon the following:—

A.D. 957. Elfric's Canons, No. 29: 'Let no priest sottishly drink to intemperance, nor force much drink on others; for he should be always in readiness, so as to have his wits if a child be to be baptised or a man to be houseled; and if nothing of this should happen, yet he ought not to be drunk, for our Lord doth forbid drunkenness to His ministers.'

So, again, amongst the canons made in King Edgar's reign, under A.D. 960, No. 57: 'That priests guard themselves

against over-drinking, and teach the same to other men,' with divers other like counsels.

Once more, amongst Anselm's Canons at Westminster, which will take in the date of this chapter, under the year A.D. 1102, we have these words, which refer evidently to the old custom of Edgar: 'That priests go not to drinking bouts, *nor drink to pegs.*' Very remarkable words indeed, and very suspicious. And one calls to mind again some other lines of Cowper in 'The Progress of Errour':—

> Strike up the fiddles, let us all be gay,
> Laymen have leave to dance if parsons play.

And without pressing the subject further, it must, I am afraid, be admitted that what my Talking Friend and his time-honoured father said was true—the habits of the people were low, and the inclination to intemperance great. The truth is simply this. Drinking was now, and ever has been, a great vice in the nation. The *mead bench* and the *ale bench* always led to *penniless bench.* Few in those days could be said to be *a peg too low* when drink was flowing—an expression still in use, but dating as far back as the days of Dunstan, who counselled Edgar to have fixed gold and silver pegs in the drinking cups, that each, for shame's sake, might keep himself within compass and measure. King Ranald says to Hereward, 'We ourselves drink beer *by the peg* at midday, but a stranger is welcome to fill his inside at all hours.'

At the same time, even if, as the above-cited canons clearly admit, there was low life amongst the country priests and amongst the city ones also, it was not now as in Lord Macaulay's 'Review of the State of England in 1685.' It may be called to mind how he said in that celebrated chapter, containing much truth mixed with much unnecessary censure, that 'during the century which followed the accession of Elizabeth scarce a single person of noble descent took orders. At the close of the reign of Charles II. two sons of peers were bishops, four or five sons of peers were priests, and held valuable preferments; but these rare exceptions did not take away the reproach which lay on the body. The clergy were regarded as, on the whole, a plebeian

class'; to which he adds, within a page or two, 'Clarendon, who assuredly bore no ill will to the Church, mentions it as a sign of the confusion of ranks which the great rebellion had produced that some damsels of noble families had bestowed themselves on divines'—remarks certainly most humiliating. But, omitting the latter portion of the extract as inconsistent with the celibacy of the clergy, still increasing under the Norman kings, the former portion of it would be quite out of place here. For, as is admitted on all sides, what learning there was, was amongst the clergy, and the bishops were chancellors often, and held all high places, even to a much more recent date.

And my Talking Friend said, 'In many places in the country it is quite true that the priests joined with the people at "The Cock" and at "The Cross"' (he spoke of these as common signs, but he evidently referred to a later date, when they were to be found in his vicinity), 'and when they were wanted they might be found there; but this was not the case with all, nor was it the case here generally. The abbeys of Wenlock and Shrewsbury furnished us with excellent secular teachers, and my time-honoured father and myself heard much in their favour from those who would talk of them beneath our shade.' And I might apply here what Dr. Hook says of Becket: 'He preferred, we know, the wing of a pheasant to pulse and beans, and he was also a good judge of wine. But we are not to suppose that his whole time was passed in hunting and hawking, in feasting with nobles, and in playing chess with the king; he was a man much occupied in business, and he would lack both the time and the means for that incessant feasting and constant joviality which are supposed sometimes to be the characteristics of this period of his life.' And so, too, was it with the priests in these days. They might conform to the multitude, as they did constantly, and join in their revels, but they had plenty else to do, and many of them did it.

> As if God made them trumpets fit for fame,
> Who by their deeds deserved to bear her name.

But to revert again shortly to the old town, between

which and Montgomery, and the Cymry generally—*Welsh* my Talking Friend called them, which is Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon for *foreign*—there was a constant passing and repassing, insomuch that his time-honoured father used to say he picked up all the Welsh news long before it reached Shrewsbury—for the Welsh were a people full of small talk, like the modern Arabs, whom in that respect they very closely resemble, for at a fair one would think they were all quarrelling, whereas most probably they were simply discussing the price of a pony or a pig—and it was their custom to take a long rest by the Rea side before they pushed on for the town with their articles on sale, amongst which, strange as it may appear now, there were every now and then scraps of gold which had been picked up in the mountain streams, and were eagerly sought after by cunning workers.

We have had cause in a former page to refer to Shrewsbury's population in the early Norman days. After that time it increased rapidly, as may be picked up from ancient documents, in which though no numbers are particularly mentioned yet the drafts, and gilds, and trades, &c. show the fact. Archdeacon Owen states: 'The earliest calculation extant of the number of inhabitants was made in the year 1695; it then appeared that the whole town contained 7,383 persons. In the year 1750 there were 8,141. According to the return made on the Enumeration Act of 1801 the total of the parishes was 13,479; but as all the parishes extend into the country the number of inhabitants contained within the town and suburbs only was estimated at not more than 12,000.' At the present time the population is probably 30,000 or more, as quite a new district has risen up about the fine railway station, which promises to be within a few years one of the largest in the midland counties.

'And my time-honoured father,' one day said my Talking Friend, 'told me that he could recollect the time when all the inhabitants of the place were settled on the Wyle'—the modern Wyle-cop—'and he had heard old people talk of the alders on the banks of the Severn, and of wolves and of wild cattle, nay, more, of the town that preceded it, and of its desolation, and of its burning.' By which he of course meant Wroxeter, or Uriconium, on which the reader is referred to

an earlier chapter, and is withal advised to visit the spot for himself.

And thus, in my old age, I was set a-thinking again: and I remembered how I had sallied forth to the willows on the Severn by Atcham; how I loved to gaze upon the dear old church there (what can there be more beautiful for situation, and for music what more beautiful than the waters when they flow by softly, like Siloam's waters!) where I had been taught to know that our early historian was baptised, and where, on my way to Wroxeter, I had revelled with all the freshness of youth—well brought up and well instructed in religious learning and in profane lore by such a teacher as dear old Bishop Butler, whose kindness it is a privilege even to recollect when suns seem to set quicker and our years are receding ones!

Certainly those who wandered by the town and the Severn's banks when summer's days were long might bethink them of Milton's beautiful lines on the earth's putting forth its first vegetable kinds:—

> He scarce had said, when the bare earth, till then
> Desert and bare, unsightly, unadorn'd,
> Brought forth the tender grass, whose verdure clad
> Her universal face with pleasant green;
> Then herbs of every leaf, that sudden flower'd,
> Opening their various colours, and made gay
> Her bosom, smelling sweet: and, these scarce blown,
> Forth flourish'd quick the clust'ring vine, forth crept
> The swelling gourd, up stood the corny reed
> Embattled in her field, and th' humble shrub,
> And bush with frizzled hair implicit: last
> Rose, as in dance, the stately trees, and spread
> Their branches, hung with copious fruit, or gemm'd
> Their blossoms: with high woods the hills were crown'd,
> With tufts the valleys, and each fountain side;
> With borders long the rivers: that earth now
> Seem'd like to heaven, a seat where gods might dwell,
> Or wander with delight, and love to haunt
> Her sacred shades.

If Shrewsbury boys did not recollect such lines as these it was not dear old Bishop Butler's fault, for he took care to illustrate every classical lesson with the best of English literature, prose or poetry.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRAGIC TALES.

Thou comest, O holy man,
True sons of blessed Church to greet,
But little deeming here to meet
A wretch, beneath the ban
Of Pope and Church, for murder done
Even on the sacred altar stone.
Lord of the Isles, canto ii. 14.

We, who live in a civilised state of society, are scarcely aware of the approximation to madness which the malignant passions assume when they have not been checked and controlled in early life. The Roman kings were none of them gentlemen; they were not gentlemen, because from their earliest years the vindictive and other passions were encouraged and indulged.—DR. HOOK, *Lives of Archbishops of Canterbury*, ii. 7, 8.

I oft have heard of Lydford law,
How in the morn they hang and draw,
And sit in judgment after.
SIR W. SCOTT, *Introduct. to Scottish Minstrelsy*, i. 157.

THAT sort of Jeddart justice, or Lydford law, which means, Sir Walter said, trial after execution, is no unmeet description of the sort of justice, and its execution, which existed even in this nation in those early days when might made right, so that the question put by Gloucester, in the 'Mirror for Magistrates,' was not so superfluous as it seemed:—

For who ever sawe so strange a precedent
As execution done before judgement?

'And to this state of things,' said my Talking Friend, 'my time-honoured father would often refer as his years drew nearer to an end, calling my attention to the fact, bidding me consider how happy was the change, and how fortunate it was for me that in the ordinary course of an oak's life I

might yet live to see greater changes and further improvements, little supposing, good and worthy old oak tree! that I should live to see the railroad running within a bow-shot of my branches, and that I should hear the infernal screech of the locomotive as it hurried on its way towards Minsterley or Pool, carrying along with it the riches of this the mineral valley of the Rea—the riches of which as yet have not been half developed. And I perfectly well recollect his saying to me on one occasion, 'If so late as the reign of John, Rees-ap-Maelgwn, the young prince of South Wales—as some said not more than seven years of age, or, as others, seventeen—was barbarously executed, or, as you might say, murdered, by Robert de Vipont, castellan of Salop, to whom the king had issued his orders, what horrible things do you suppose I must have heard of during the many years of my long life?

'Depend upon it,' continued my Talking Friend, 'there were long periods in this land when, as my deeply respected priest of Hanwood said, "*every man did what was right in his own eyes*," and "*there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything*." The way they went was not before the Lord, but every man turned to his own ways.' So would the Oak of the latter days speak; and when one reads as an historical fact such a barbarous execution as that of the young Welsh prince one at once recognises the days and the times as evil. Certainly then it could not be said—

> Conveniens homini est, hominem servare, voluptas,
> Et melius nulla quæritur arte favor.

To the Saxons generally the time-honoured Oak was very much attached, though, as has been remarked before, the Cymry, or, as he afterwards learnt to call them, the Welsh, were his original favourites, and with them he always associated the name of his old friend Tredithic.

On my asking my Talking Friend if they, too, were as cruel as the Normans in the days of their haughty firmness, which had a dash of the Plantagenet madness in it, he said, 'Certainly not!' but he added, 'My good father always stated openly that they were ready to draw their *seaxe* on

any provocation, and they were seldom sheathed without a stain.' And I bethought me how happy must anyone have been who lived on the banks of the quiet Rea apart from strife and bloodshed—

> Piscosæ cui circum flumina Lernæ
> Ars fuerat, pauperque domus ; nec nota potentum
> Limina—

and I expressed my thoughts aloud, but in my native tongue ; upon which I heard once more that ominous rustling of his leaves which I had often heard before when my Talking Friend was much moved, and he said, 'Many a time and oft the aged priest of Hanwood has said in my hearing that iniquity, transgression, and sin are confined to no place; and that although it might fester in the mass, and breed foul corruption, yet there are plenty of places in the country, and amongst the *several* houses of the county, as our forefathers spake, where the *seaxe* had had their way, and where blood had been shed almost like water.' And he instanced the house of Urtel, which, as far as I could make out, must have stood somewhere in the direction of Crow, or Monk's Meole—not far off, probably, from where the spring falls into the road between the present turnpike and Radbrook. At all events it was between the Hanwood Gate and Kingsland.

The Story of Urtel.

'The story of Urtel,' said my Talking Friend, 'is one I have often heard my time-honoured father tell; and he always told it with great unwillingness, and as a warning against the effect of evil and unbridled passion ; for he said, "It is a tale of blood, the mere scent of which will irritate the cattle in the field ; and Urtel, to the last, was an unmitigated heathen and a believer in Woden, and as savage as any Dane or Viking who, in after years, may have ravaged the Severn's sides, and sacked the people's homes, and plundered their fields, as you have read they did after their arrival at Quatbridge, where now is Bridgenorth."'

I should here interpose that I could not very well make out the date of this story ; but, as the mention occurs in it of

the sun's face becoming almost black, it might be as early as A.D. 733, when we read in the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' that 'the sun was eclipsed, and all the sun's disc was like a black shield.' Urtel's alarm, too, at the 'stars shooting rapidly' seems to bring it near to this time, as the same fact is mentioned under A.D. 744. But to recount the story, as far as I am able, from my Talking Friend's version of it.

'What the position in life which Urtel originally held was I never heard my aged father say; he only described him as one of the most hard-bitten and ill-favoured of men; but he was a man with a will, and always himself, and self-possessed. He had, however, like other mortals, one weak point—he was superstitious, and took great note of the signs in the heavens; and on one occasion when there had been an eclipse of the sun, and when he described it as "black and burnished like a warrior's shield," although he was on the point of leaving his house, nothing could move him till a lucky day came round.

'Where he came from was not certainly known, but he passed and repassed between Buildwas and Shrewsbury—or rather the places now known by these names—which is curious considering the after connection there was between Melam, i.e. Monk and Crow Meole, and Buildwas Abbey.

'Well,' continued my Talking Friend, 'from Buildwas, or from near it, Urtel first made his appearance at Cruck Meole and on the banks of the Rea; and he came ostensibly to visit an old acquaintance called Wig (you still retain the old Saxon name in *Wig*wig, near Harley, and at *Wig*more near the Marsh, in the parish of Westbury), a Saxon, though not so hard-bitten yet almost as rough-hewn as Urtel himself. The small log hut of Wig, thatched with reeds from the Clanbrook, my time-honoured father said, lay between what you now call Short Hill and Plealey.

'For several years—once a year at least—Urtel had made his visit, and upon one occasion he brought with him his lovely daughter, named Ean'—not knowing the name, I frequently asked my Talking Friend if he did not mean Ellen, but he constantly affirmed that the venerable Oak always said her name was Ean. 'Why or wherefore Urtel

made her his companion on this visit none of us knew; but, as she rested beneath the shade of the old tree, "a lovelier creature," said my aged father, "was never seen." And he added, "It was a strange sight, I ween, to see so rough-hewn a man in the company of one whose speech was as soft as the summer water as it rippled over the gravel shallows of the Rea, and whose form was graceful as the kingfisher's flight, dashing up the stream, all rainbow-coloured, to her nest."

'Upon this occasion the visit was longer than usual, and Ean was left alone constantly with Ursula, the aged wife of Wig. He and Urtel were away for the greater part of the day, and on their return they frequently brought with them bits of what appeared to be gold-veined quartz, and they held consultations about it in the evening; and Urtel was frequently heard to say that the valley of Hach was a treasure-store, that they should soon be in the possession of wealth, and that they would then go and live in "the town"—meaning Shrewsbury, no doubt—for protection, and that he would give the hand of Ean to the best man there, and not throw her away upon a country ceorl.

'Thus matters went on for a month or two, and it was well known and bruited abroad that Urtel and Wig were constant visitors of Pontesford Hill, and of the lovely little trout stream which winds its brawling way between the precipitous side of that well-known hill (for who had not heard of its silver arrow?), and The Oaks'—that is, the Hach of 'Domesday.' 'Here it was,' continued my Talking Friend, 'that they picked up the glistening quartz which attracted their attention and kindled the avaricious projects, if not of Wig, yet certainly of Urtel, whose deep-set eyes shot forth an unearthly fire when he referred to the subject.

'But in all their visits the household of Wig was not unvisited by others. Further up the country, at a place which we now call Wrentnall, there lived a well-known Saxon holder called Chetel. It so chanced that at the time referred to he was on his way to Powisa, or Powisland, where he had relations, on some joint business of his own and Ernui's, who held an adjoining manor, and on his way he

must needs pass the residence of Wig; and whilst he rested himself and his pony (even the ponies of the country were notorious) he was at once smitten with the loveliness and the unmistakable simplicity of the fair Ean.

'Wig was one of his dependants, as you would now speak, for the same Ernui, who was the Saxon owner of Hach, or The Oaks, in those days, held Warentenehall, or Wrentnall, in common with Chetel—all of which parts, as late as "Domesday," were *Silva* and *Haia*, though there was good arable land there even then—the one having a half ox team and the other five, together with their several serfs and *radmen*, or *sokemen*, some of whom were less free than others. Wig, however, was neither one nor other, he not being bound as a *villain*, or at least having the liberty of the *villains* of after days, whom their lord, on occasions, permitted to leave the soil. And so it came about (for he was a clever *venator*, like the Roger of Norman days) that when Ernui and Chetel went to hunt the wolf and the boar, to draw the badger or to trap the fox, Wig was their constant companion, and a sort of dependant.

'One evening, on their return, Ursula (Wig's wife) told Urtel of the visitor they had had, and how she thought he was deeply smitten with Ean; that, in fact, he intended repeating his visit, all of which was received with evident satisfaction by Urtel. Ursula said afterwards—for she never could abide the father, though she loved the daughter—"that a smile played over his otherwise laughless countenance, and that for once in her life she saw humanity on his hard-bitten face." Wig, out of regard and respect for Chetel, was far from displeased with the visit, and for that evening his and his copesmate's gold schemes were superseded by other conversation.

'True to his word, within nine days (or nights, as our forefathers spoke, and whose form of speech you still retain in se'night and fortnight), on his return from the lowlands of *Powisa*, Chetel repeated his visit, and, as the custom was, brought with him gifts and presents: cloth of bodkin, and two *bodekyns*, one of gold the other of silver, wherewith to work it, which he picked up from the pack of a foreign pedlar

in "THE TOWN," a cloak of *wad*, or a species of blue flannel —silk being then a great rarity—and from his own stores at Wrentnall (treasured in the old oaken hutch, and preserved from moth and vermin by bunches of wormwood) a quilt of squirrels' skins, attached to the four corners of which were the whitest and the brightest fox's teeth that were ever seen, set, as it would appear, in gold—collected, possibly, from the drift of the hollows in the neighbourhood into which Urtel was searching so diligently. No doubt the quilt was one of the treasured ornaments of those days.

'On his first visit Ean, as the inmate of Wig's hut and the well-beloved of Ursula, to whom Chetel came as the great man, received him with all the natural courteousness of a well-bred Saxon woman—one might say,' continued my Talking Friend, with reference to our derivation of the word, 'as a LADY *who well knew how to distribute the bread* of the household; but when Chetel came as a suitor with gifts in his hands, did she not know within herself that her heart was not her own to give, but it was Ethel's of Woodcote?

'Woman true to herself is always true to those she loves; and although her father Urtel had no inclination for Ethel, who was not a rich man like Chetel, though a lesser thegn and a free-man, or, as you might now say, a yeoman, yet something—no words, no vows, no plighting of troth, no promise—something stronger than all these, because unexpressed and inexpressible, had passed between the two, and she acknowledged him in her own heart to be what her own race, and the inhabitants of the north generally, were in the habit of calling their "true-love," or, as we speak in these more modern days, she considered herself engaged to him. No thought had entered her mind of "wed," or security, or "foster-ban," or "memory gift"; these were after considerations, as Saxon manners became less simple.

'The consequence was that Chetel was received with what might be called coldness, to the great annoyance of her father, who persisted in her retaining the gifts, and forced her into a promise of seeing Chetel again. And so, to Ean's no little discomfort, matters remained for the present.

'But before long, and, no doubt, instructed by Ursula,

who took care that Wig and Urtel should be away, Chetel again presented himself. Upon this, Ean, reading the nobleness of his mind, told him at once the state of her feelings, and how she considered herself fore-plighted and hand-fasted to another, though her father disapproved of their loves. And Chetel, as honourable as he was noble-natured, not only loved the girl the more, but told her that, so far from being set against her, he would do all he could to bring matters about. He moreover added that he had seen the freeman Ethel of Woodcote more than once, and that he was even now at Cardeston, on his way to Caus and Wattleborough, places which in after years became well-known strongholds in this county, and, as you and your brothers well knew in your boyhood, those castles are still in existence—not the work of the Saxon, but of the Norman, in his own defence.

'On the return of Urtel his daughter told him all that had passed, and how Chetel had pressed upon her the presents before mentioned, and which, under the circumstances, she could not then refuse. She added that the whole of his conduct had been that of an honourable, high-minded Saxon—noble he might have been by his courtesy—and that she must respect his name and lineage till the last day of her life. To which she added these other words, not without tears and sighs, "Father mine! you know how I have loved you with all the undivided love of an only daughter, and except in this one thing I never would cross your wishes. But my heart is no longer my own, and the only person I could ever marry is Ethel of Woodcote, and the noble Chetel has promised to aid me in my suit, and to persuade you to assent to our union."

'Upon which the hard-bitten features of Urtel became, if possible, harder still, and he swore a great oath, saying, "By Woden, the god of my fathers, you shall never marry the *ceorl*—that of Woodcote—how he came by that name I know not, for noble he is not, but a *nithing*." So spoke he in his wrath, using that most offensive term. And he added, "Chetel is my choice, and, with the authority of a father, I insist upon your complying with my wishes, or I shall look upon you as no longer my child. Obey my wishes, or I give

you over to the great Saxon earl, who knows very well how to coop up and deal with disobedient and refractory maidens." And again he swore a great oath, and his curse was deep and low.

'In those days,' continued my Talking Friend, 'though Saxon maidens enjoyed a comparative liberty, yet their fathers' will was almost law, and there was no wooing and courtship, as in your days, to be remembered always and thought upon often. Those who loved might love in quiet, as Ean loved Ethel, but if the father disapproved, the damsel's hopes were mostly blighted and the suitor dismissed roughly.

'It might be a week after what is before narrated that Chetel contrived to meet Urtel and Wig on their return from one of their gold-seeking trips, in which they had been more than usually unsuccessful, so that Urtel's temper was less under his command, and, though generally self-possessed enough, his greeting of Chetel was not such as might have been expected from his position.

'Chetel saw all this, but made no comment upon it, though Wig made a sort of apology by stating that on the foregoing night they had been much disconcerted, both of them, by the wild shooting of the stars, which lasted for hours, and must bode some evil chance or tidings, for the stars never danced without a reason. At another time Chetel might have noticed this, but not now. Before, however, they reached Wig's log hut he broke ground, and declared the object of his visit—in fact, that he came to plead for Ethel of Woodcote, whom he knew to be a *ceorl*, or freeman, of high character, and that even now he was, in the employ of the Saxon earl, on a mission to the Cymry, whom, you know, we now speak of as the Welsh.

'They had just crossed a dark ravine where they had been searching for gold-veined quartz embedded in the clay, and as they passed a deep fissure in the rocks, near what wayfarers under my branches now call Lloyd's Hole, from a person of that name who was accidentally drowned there, Urtel stopped short, and exclaimed in the wildest and fiercest way, "Rather than Ethel Woodcote shall marry my child, either he or I will find the bottom of that hole. Talk

no more of it, noble Chetel! By my consent she is thine, and thine only. The malison of Freia rest upon her womb if she disobey the behests of her father!" Clearly,' said my Talking Friend, 'by the framing of his speech, Urtel must have been a *thegn*, though my time-honoured father thought very little of him, calling him what he had called Ethel of Woodcote—a *nithing*, a very miserable appellation.

'Nothing more was then said, and they all made their way to the home of Wig, skirting what is now called Pontesford, and so on to Plealey, through the open ground by Sibberscott, or, as it was then called, Sibald's Cote. Chetel remained where he was for the night, and the next morning left the lowly but hospitable roof of Wig, the fast friend for ever of the lovely Ean, having sacrificed himself nobly, to the highest pitch of self-denial, for one he loved so well.

'But the darkness of the darkest night was as nothing to the dark soul of Urtel on the present occasion. He cursed the day of his birth, and uttered unheard of execrations on his child and on Ethel of Woodcote; and he hoped, in the name of all the Saxon gods, that the Valkyriur, or the Weird Sisters, would spin their threads short, relieving him, at last, of a child's disobedience, than which, he said, the *ætter* of the Radcliff worm (*i.e.* the viper's or the adder's poison) was not worse. And the next day he departed with his daughter, bitter of soul.

'And time passed on—a year or more—when Urtel made another visit to Wig; but on this occasion Ean was not with him. It was, however, a most melancholy one, for his guardian angel—woman—was not by his side, and he plotted nothing but wickedness against the chosen one of Ean's heart.

'An arrangement was made—for Wig hoped that Urtel was softened—that Ethel of Woodcote should meet him there; and he came, at Urtel's request, without distrust. And after a day or two, in which Wig and he were engaged in their old search, Urtel proposed that he and Ethel should investigate the ravine together, taking the course of the little brook into which the drift and washings of the quartz fell, and in which, or in the adjoining clay, he hoped to find the gold which

would glut his avarice—a very small portion indeed of which he contemplated sharing with Wig. This proposed search was very unwillingly acquiesced in by Wig, for although, on his arrival, he thought that Urtel was softened, his suspicions were roused by Ursula's remarking that on the preceding afternoon she had cause to observe he had an "evil eye" towards Ethel. The result was an impression on his mind that Urtel meant no good, but he did not see how to hinder their intended expedition. And, sure enough, the impression turned out to be a reality; for, although they started together, they did not return together. A week or more afterwards the mangled corpse of Ethel of Woodcote was picked up in the eddy of the pool above alluded to, and it was clear enough that his death was not by accident, as no less than five *seaxe* stabs were found on it by the headboro', who in those early days did something like what your coroner does now.

'Urtel appeared to take great interest in the search—stating that Ethel started with him on the way, but that they had parted near the Radcliff, where he laid several springes for *cocks*—the old name for woodcocks—which he intended to pick up on their way home. He only added that they never met again afterwards, and that he waited, shouting for him, till dark, when he thought it not unlikely that as they had missed each other Ethel might have returned home. Owing to the hue-and-cry that had been raised, the corpse, on being found, was brought at once to the cote of Wig, and old Ursula noted well that when it entered a cold blue shudder passed over the countenance of Urtel, and that fresh blood trickled down from the wounds of Ethel, and she said within herself, "Thy hand, Urtel, is red with the lad's life-blood, and all the water of the Hach-beck, and that of the Rea into which it flows, can never wash it out. Old as I am, that I know!"

'And Urtel left the habitation of Wig without a blessing!

'The next year he returned with Ean, and the old search for gold was commenced, but guardedly and suspiciously on Wig's part. Why Ean should have come at all was not easy to divine at first, but she told Ursula that it was partly under

threats and compulsion, and then under the hope of seeing Ethel's grave ; which she did, for Ursula took her to Habberley Churchyard, where the dust of the poor youth lay, for he was not buried at Cardeston, as some said he was.

'Nor was it long before she was laid by his side, and her blood, too, was on her father's hands. Chetel once more came over to visit her, but her father he could not abide the sight of, nor would he hold any communication with him except in the presence of a third person. Poor Ean he found in a sad and miserable state, and did all he could to console her, but it was clear to him that her own life was bound up in that of her "true love's," and that her own days would not be many in this world.

'They were shorter than he anticipated. Urtel, who had occasion to see Chetel on several of his visits in the direction upwards from Hach to Warentenehall, or Wrentnall, still pressed on him the union with his daughter, while *he* never in her presence alluded to their loves again, so sacred was the subject. Tears only were shed on both sides—but a look and a tear are oftentimes beyond all eloquence of words, and so it was with the noble Chetel and the lovely Ean.

'One evening when his daughter had so intensely resisted Urtel's request that she should marry Chetel as to say, "It never could be, and that he must deal with her as he listed," the half savage became greatly excited—more like a Plantagenet Norman, my time-honoured father said, than a Saxon—and in the paroxysm of his wild rage he wished her life's blood was mingled with the dead *nithing's*.

'For herself she could have borne anything, but when such an indignity as this was passed on the dead she could withhold no longer, for the poor girl's heart was ready to burst, and she said, in the agony of her soul, "Father, forbear ! Swear no more by Woden, father, but repent in time, and call upon the Christian's God for help. It is not hidden—blood will out ! Aco, the idiot, saw the *scaxe's* flash when you struck, three times, poor Ethel of Woodcote ; neither was it the eagle's nor the water-neck's cry which you heard, but Aco's, when you flung Ethel headlong into the boiling flood. Repent ! repent ! It has all been discovered to Chetel, and

you are no longer safe here—anywhere—without repenting. You know of, and disapprove of, the faith I have adopted; but when I spoke of such sad things to the priest of Buildwas, he said, 'It is not yet too late—never—whilst there is life; and that the Saviour said to the thief from His cross, "*Soð, Ic the segde, To-dag thee bist mid Me on paradiso*"'—or, as the priest of Hanwood would now read it in St. Luke's gospel, '*Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*'"

'The curse of God was upon the wretch, and he struck his daughter, and she fell near the old settle by the ingle. Her head struck its backboard of oak, and she never breathed again—a few deep sighs and a groan of agony, and the beautiful Ean, beautiful in mind as in person, was no more! But she, too, did not die without a witness. Ursula saw and was cognisant of it all, and she said, in a hollow whisper—for her tremor was great—"The Avenger of Blood is behind thee, Urtel, double-grained murderer of Ethel and of thine own child! Flee for thy life—this house shelters thee no more!" And sometimes, as I once heard the priest of Hanwood say—that priest I loved so well—"The softest whisper of the Spirit is louder than all the thunders of *that* Sinai." And Urtel heard the words, and he fled no man knew whither. And Ean was buried beneath the birches in the old churchyard of Habberley, close by the hunting-ground of Marsetelie, where kings in after days came forth to hunt, and had royal attendance, and a body-guard from the ancient town of Scrobbesbyrig.

'Meanwhile the old locality of Crow and Monk Meole knew Urtel no more. His place was not found there. Blood—double, deep-grained, incarnadined blood—had stained his hands, and he must flee away and find no rest; for Chetel, the faithful and noble Chetel, said, "Since Ean's death this land cannot hold us both!" And Ursula gave him back the presents which Ean had entrusted to her care and never were relics so precious as these were when treasured up in the woodlands of Wrentnall, where was the homestead of Chetel.

'I have often heard you and your brothers say beneath

my old boughs—welcome were you and your brothers to my acorns and my shade—as the Cruckton harriers, in your boyhood, passed by, that the hunted hare returned to its form. And, strange as it may seem, there is an attraction in guilt to seek its own locality, conscience-stricken and conscience-logged, and blood will again touch blood.

'So was it with Urtel, after whom, for three or four years at least, Chetel made a constant and unwearied but ineffectual search. To this the love of Ean constrained him, and he had no rest, and was inwardly consumed.

'It was late one November evening, after all due care had been taken for Martinmas provision and the winter stores, that a stranger came to the humble dwelling of Wig and craved food and shelter. As was always the case in Saxon times, it was readily granted, and the board was spread.

'At first a strange feeling came over Wig and Ursula, and although they had no immediate suspicions, and knew nothing of the man, they were mentally oppressed and felt uncomfortable. The features of the stranger they had no remembrance of, but although he spoke low, and as if with difficulty, they seemed to recognise the undertone of a well-known voice. Nothing, however, transpired, and he ate and drank, and retired to such a resting-place as the slender hospitalities of a Saxon cote afforded.

'Meanwhile Ursula had noticed that the stranger said no grace, and returned no thanks, as Saxons in these parts, even in those early days of half-conversion, had learnt to do, whilst the worship of Woden had hardly died out, and or ever the bright light of Christianity had fully come in. And the priest of Hanwood said, when I marvelled at such mixed service, that it was a case parallel to that of the strange nations which were transplanted in Samaria, and who, being plagued with lions, made a mixture of religion: "*They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.*"

'As just said, there might have been some misgiving, but as yet no direct suspicion was aroused, and the household sought their rest—as the inmates supposed. Not so, however, the stranger in disguise, who was none other than the wicked, murderous, and revengeful Urtel. He came not to

rest, but to kill and to destroy. And in the middle of the night, when all was still, he crept forth from his beist, or bed of fern, where he had laid him down by the side of Wig, snatched up his *seaxe* by the light of the moon, and struck the unsuspecting sleeper two or three times, saying, "Let this teach thee, nithing, to set Chetel on the scent o' me!" Wig only awoke to feel that it was his insidious enemy, and to die.

'In an instant Urtel sought out Ursula in the byre, or inner chamber, which he knew well enough. But she had been awakened by the scuffle, and in her woman's fear had fled for help, which she could not find; for in those days, said my time-honoured father, neighbours were few and far between, and, indeed, he thought the nearest habitation was at Plealey.

'The next day it was bruited abroad that a murder had been committed—that honest Wig had been stabbed in the dark, and that Ursula, having given the alarm, had fled. The poor creature dared not to return, but, not knowing what to do, sought refuge with the noble and generous Chetel at Wrentnall. This set him on the search and the hunt-up again, and, having raised the whole township and the whole district round, the closest search was made for the murderer, but in vain. And the search was again remitted, and another dwelt in the cote of Wig; and the winter months passed by, and the flowers of the spring had come and gone.

'At last, in the June following, when Chetel was following his favourite pursuit of trout fishing in that wonderful little trout stream of old time, which ran between Hach, or The Oaks, on one side, and Pontesford Hill on the other, he was attracted by the appearance of a rough stranger, who seemed to dodge him from height to height, and shallow to shallow, and pool to pool. This put him on his guard, as did the low growl of the old wolf-dog Ulric, his faithful companion always, whether fishing or hunting.

'This must have gone on for some time, for it was not until Chetel had reached the deep dark ravine before mentioned as "Lloyd's Hole" (a name of comparatively recent date) that there was a simultaneous rush made by the stranger and Ulric, the wolf-dog, and the flashing *seaxe*

was seen in, and was wrenched out of, the wanderer's hand instantaneously by Chetel.

'"Freia, Thor, and Woden curse thee and thy dog!" said a well-known voice; "but for that shaggy beast thou hadst by this time been gurgling in the pool below, and thy life's blood had mingled with that of mine enemy—Ethel of Woodcote!" A crash and a cry were heard, and the wretch was drowned in the pool he had picked out, with fell and malicious intent, as the watery winding-sheet of Chetel!'

'Such was the tale of blood my time-honoured father shuddered to speak of. But he would add, with a pleasant rustling of his leaves, that Ursula remained with Chetel till the day of his death; and it was from a kinswoman of this Ursula,' continued my Talking Friend, 'who succeeded to the dwelling of Wig, that old "*Ustle-Bustle*"—your childish name for Ursula, a dependant of the family who resided long at Hanwood—was descended. And often,' concluded the Old Oak—and his boughs shook mysteriously—'have I heard the priest of Hanwood illustrate these dreadful deaths by the well-known passage from the Book which he loved, and taught the people out of it, as the good man well knew how to teach, for he had grace and understanding given him to turn all things noted in the Scripture of Truth to rare account: "*And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him; surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord.*" And solemn and sad was the demeanour of the good man when he so illustrated the story, but somehow one seemed better for it. First or last, the whole youth of the valley of the Rea had heard the story at the priest's lips, and they learnt, too, that though wickedness may abound the Lord's arm is not shortened.'

And when he had finished the story he again said, as has been remarked before, that although the people generally were very ignorant, yet were there good priests here and there who took care that they should learn chief truths. And he added that their word *preost*, in early days, and before the introduction of the Romish gradation in the ministry, was used with much latitude, and for a teacher generally of divine truth. The *mass-priest*, or *presbyter*, was the regularly ordained one whose office and privilege it was to consecrate the Eucharist.

Whereupon I asked, 'How, then, could the days be so evil—in early Saxon as well as in Norman days—as your time-honoured father constantly reported them to be?' And he replied—and his words fell mournfully on my ear—'With all your boasted knowledge and education, are not the days evil now?' And I sighed

(For sighs will ever trouble human breath)

as I thought of the excellent beauty which attached to the spot and locality of this tale of blood, and I drew a painful contrast, in my mind's eye, between the soft sounds of nature then and the sometime wild ferocity of sinning man; and those words in Wordsworth's 'Evening Walk' seemed to haunt my imagination

> Sweet are the sounds that mingle from afar,
> Heard by calm lakes, as peeps the folding star,
> Where the dark dabbler 'mid the rustling sedge
> And feeding pike starts from the water's edge;
> Or the swan stirs the reeds, his neck and bill
> Wetting, that drip upon the water still;
> And heron, as resounds the trodden shore,
> Shoots upward, darting her long neck before.

But what has been said in former chapters, and the story of Urtel taken by itself, will show the state of the county in Saxon times. It remains to add something of the early Norman days, of which the time-honoured Oak, the father of my Talking Friend, did not think favourably. 'The Saxon' he would say, 'was quite equal, at times, to deeds of blood—and blood has flowed like water—but he was not outrageously fierce and cruel as the Norman, when he came in

and trampled upon his rights, and regarded not the woman by the bit-hearth.' And he then said, in a low, rustling tone, 'There was nothing about which the Old Oak talked so mysteriously as about the Peverels, and he would add, "If report be square with him, William the Conqueror was over closely connected with the Saxons on his visit to the Court of Edward the Confessor."'

There can be no doubt, because it is borne out by historical proof, that the homes of the Saxons and their women were cruelly treated by Norman marauders; and one might have said, in the bitterness of his distress—

> Here is a general catalogue of knaves;
> A man might study all the prisons o'er,
> Yet never attain this knowledge.

But though there were Peverels of Shropshire, descended, as was said, from Ranulph, who held a small territory under the Norman earl, yet there is reason to believe that much which was current talk in early times, and which the time-honoured Oak heard tell of beneath his branches, as the people passed from Scrobbesbyrig to Montgomery, was but scandal, and the *liaison* of William with a Saxon lady of rank (which could not have occurred earlier than A.D. 1051) but a fiction. It showed, however, the Saxon's view of the Norman's tyrannous lust, and he would say that if there was a Pagan Peverel (a name of the family in Henry I.'s time) the Conqueror, he thought, though a very brave man, was worse than a pagan.

But as the history of the Peverels has often been referred to (though not in these pages) as a curious one, I will avail myself of Mr. Eyton's account.

'The disinherited baron'—that is to say, Gerard de Tornai, who held Sutton Maddock, according to 'Domesday,' of the Earl Roger—'had one, or more than one, daughter. She (if only one) was Sibil, the wife of Hamo Peverel, whose influence in Shropshire, already great in the time of Earl Hugh (1093–1098), will have originated in this marriage, and in the accompanying favour of that seignorial lord, whether king or earl, who dictated the re-disposal of Gerard's forfeited estates.

'The bare mention of the name of Peverel will suggest a string of recollections to everyone acquainted with the vicissitudes which befell this county during the first century after the Norman conquest. National records, monastic chartularies, chronicles, and legends all speak of the Peverels; but the pervading feature of every account or hint is that something is kept back which either was not known or was not to be talked of.

'The only specific statement yet advanced attributes the various branches of this house to a Saxon ancestress, who, as we are told, was first the concubine of Duke William of Normandy, and then the wife of Ranulph Peverel of Hatfield (Essex), and who, after being mother (by the Duke) of William Peverel of Nottingham, subsequently gave lawful birth to all the other Peverels who figured in the time of Henry I.

'This story, improbable in its simplest form, and with the fewest adjuncts, has further been embodied with such a variety of impossible circumstances as to leave its credibility in extreme jeopardy. Mystery there certainly is about the whole subject, and the truth may very possibly be buried with some tale of courtly scandal, though not of the precise character hitherto pointed out.'

True or untrue, the time-honoured Oak believed in the story, and although he lived to see the benefits which arose from the intermixture by marriage of Saxon and Norman, yet he always maintained that the barbarities of the latter, dependants and superiors, were unparalleled; and he would have applied the words of Robert of Gloucester's 'Chronicle' without reserve to all:—

> Thus nas so hey man non, that hym enes wyth seyde,
> That me ne ssolde hym take anon, and to prison lede.
> Moneye heye men of the lond in prison he huld strong,
> So that muche del of Engelond thogte his lyf to long.

One thing my Talking Friend constantly reported as most satisfactory to his aged father, which was this—that, however much it was attempted to tread out the old Saxon tongue by the command of the Norman (it was not to be taught in schools was the imperious order, nor to be used in

the law courts), the command had not any perceptible influence in country places, and beneath his venerable shade the comers and goers of the Saxon race still spoke pleasantly and discoursed at ease in their mother tongue. Even when

> The splitting wind
> Makes flexible the knees of knotted oaks,

and the time-honoured Oak yielded to the blast, it pleased him to think upon this.

And in summing up the conduct of the high estates of the realm, painful as it may be to make such a statement, it is quite clear that the grand old tree by the Rea side was quite of the historian Hume's opinion, as regarded the Conqueror at least—and my Talking Friend added of all the Plantagenets also, who knew that their tenure was by force of arms.

'His heart was hardened against all compassion towards the people, and he scrupled no measure, however violent or severe, which seemed requisite to support his plan of tyrannical administration. The insurrections and conspiracies in so many parts of the kingdom had involved the landed proprietors, more or less, in the guilt of treason, and the king took advantage of executing against them, with the utmost rigour, the laws of forfeiture and attainder. Their lives were, indeed, commonly spared, but their estates were confiscated, and either annexed to the royal demesnes or conferred, with the most profuse bounty, on the Normans and other foreigners. Whilst the king's declared intention was to depress, or rather entirely extirpate, the English gentry, it is easy to believe that scarcely the form of justice would be observed in those violent proceedings, and that any suspicions served as the most undoubted proofs of guilt against a people devoted to destruction. It was sufficient in an Englishman to be opulent, or noble, or powerful; and the policy of the king, concurring with the rapacity of foreign adventurers, produced almost a total revolution in the landed property of the kingdom. Ancient and honourable families were reduced to beggary; the nobles themselves were everywhere treated with ignominy and contempt; they had the mortifica-

tion of seeing their castles and manors possessed by Normans of the meanest birth and lowest stations, and they found themselves carefully excluded from every road which led either to riches or preferment.'

According to the observation of the time-honoured Oak, nothing distressed and humiliated and so debased the ancient Saxon people so much as the continual pressure they were made to feel day by day, insomuch that they had no assurance either of life or property. Hence they were unable to listen even to their best advisers, and when they might have made a stand against an incoming evil, opportunity passed them by and occasion was let slip. And I bethought me of those painful words in the Book of Exodus: '*And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.*' So true is THE WORD for ever!

Then, again, continual warfare hardened their hearts. And I bethought me of the great Lord Clarendon's words—'Of all the punishments and judgments that the provoked anger of the Divine Providence can pour out upon a nation full of transgressions, there is none so terrible and destroying as that of war.' And, looking to the successes of the Normans and their lordly tyranny, how applicable are the words which presently follow!—'In war the confidence and the courage which a victorious army contracts by notable successes, and the dejection of spirit and the consternation which a subdued party undergoes by frequent defeats, is not at an end when the war is determined, but hath its effects very long after; and the tenderness of nature and the integrity of manners which are driven away or powerfully discountenanced by the corruption of war are not quickly recovered, but instead thereof a roughness, jealousy, and distrust introduced that makes conversation unpleasant and uneasy; and the weeds which grow up in the shortest war can hardly be pulled up and extirpated without a long and undisturbed peace.'

'Oftentimes,' said my Talking Friend, 'have I heard my time-honoured father speak of the cruel results of war, and although, as you are very well aware, we had something amongst ourselves very like to a modified feudal tenure, yet

would he speak of the feudal law, carried out under Norman views, as the most oppressive of all laws, and he could not bear to think of the valley of the Rea being parcelled out to a tyrannical baron more lordly than the king himself in his royal demesne ; for under these barons were other holders—mesne, or next tenants, I have heard them called—who oftentimes had no bowels of mercy, and only hearts of stone ; and he would illustrate this by the history of the Radman of Ruesset, Ralph de Caux, Mabel of Alderbury, and the poor but lovely country maid of Wattlesborough, or, as it is called in "Domesday," Wetesburg, at no great distance from Stoney Stretton.'

Story of Norman Cruelty and Oppression.

'The Radman of Ruesset, my time-honoured father used to say, was one of the heartiest men of the district, which you now call Ford—for you are to understand that it was not till the time of Henry I. that Ruesset, Reusset, or Reweset, lost its name, Ford becoming the head of the hundred which was formerly headed by Alderbury, where the headboro' dwelt—that is to say, the borough of Alberie, or, as some think even yet, the *berrys*, *tun*, or *well* of the alders, one of the commonest trees in the valley of the Rea, from whence, indeed, Alretone had its name before the Norman Corbet stamped on it the name of his birthplace, the *pays de Caux*—for so the priest of Hanwood calleth it, to whom, as you know, I am indebted for all such explanations as an oak tree could not come at except by some such means. It was he also that told me that formerly Little and Great Hanwood, though now within the liberties of Shrewsbury, were all once in Ruesset Hundred.'

Whereupon I interrupted my Talking Friend, asking him to enlighten my ignorance as to what a radman was, for I was quite in the dark.

And the good old tree's leaves shook gently, so that I felt sure he was not offended, and he answered me presently and pleasantly, saying, 'You have asked a question which it is not so easy to answer. Indeed, all that I can tell you is that

the Radman of Ruesset spoke of serfs, and villains, or boors, as his inferiors, and said that he was a freeman ; but in some way we never understood. He was not allowed to leave the soil without his lord's permission, though it seems never to have been refused ; and he had, moreover, to pay to the *mesne*, or next tenant under the lord *in capite*—as the term was—so much agricultural labour on so many days in the year. Perhaps you will be most clearly resolved upon the matter by looking upon *radmen*, and *radchenistres* as better sort of tenants. But, after all, it is a doubtful matter.'

And having so said, he proceeded with his narration.

'The Radman of Ruesset, as I said, was one of the heartiest men in the valley of the Rea—and he never went by any other name, though there were plenty of radmen in the hundred, and in other hundreds, as, no doubt, you can pick up from your much-valued "Domesday Book," of which you speak so often.

'In what way he was connected with Ralph de Caux my time-honoured father could not say ; one thing only is clear, that he was not bound to him *servilely* in any way, for he went and he came as he pleased, and owed him no fealty. Never, however, for a long period of years was a man more attached to his fellow than Ralph de Caux was to the Radman of Ruesset. And the same may be said of the Lady Mabel, his wife ; for whatever was to be done the Radman of Ruesset was sure to be summoned, notwithstanding his different position in life, and he might be said to be the doer of it, and to be wanted and to be trusted was his great pleasure. But what made him so generally beloved was this, that he was frequently able to soften the wild temperature of his Norman lord, and, being himself a Saxon, he contrived constantly to ease the oppression which was now so common and was felt so deeply. And in this he was always assisted by the good Lady Mabel, who was a woman of no common stamp—beautiful in person, as the passers-by said, more beautiful in character.

'Such was the state of things when my time-honoured father became acquainted with the Radman of Ruesset, whose occupation led him constantly over that line of country

which is watered by the Rea, as well as over the adjoining line through which the small brook flows which joins the Rea at Crugeton, or Cruckton Mill, one of the berewicks of Ford. The consequence was that as he rested beneath the Old Oak's shade he could recount half the histories of the county—from what are now called by the names of Bausley, and Loton, and Hayes, and Alderbury, and Woolaston, and Wattlesborough, and Whitton, and Winsley, and Westbury, and Alretone (or, as it was now beginning to be called generally by the natives, Cause Castle), and Cardiston, and Yokelton, and Nox, and so on by Cruckton, Cruck Meole, Hanwood, Edgebold, Crow Meole, and the Radbrooke to the old town of Scrobbesbyrig—and with his jovial and hearty bearing he made the most of all current news, and was the most acceptable guest through all the country round. Being a horseman, too, as many of the radmen and radchenistres were, the grass never grew under his feet, and all his news was fresh—the Rea's waters were scarce fresher.'

When the cruel story presently to be recorded dates from I can hardly tell, but I rather suppose the painful incidents must have occurred in Henry I.'s time, because, on the authority of the priest of Hanwood, my Talking Friend said, in connection with and, I rather fancied, as introductory to it :—

'Henry I., with all his great kingly qualities, and that scholarship, too, which entitled him to the name of Beauclerc, cannot by heartship of oak be considered a good man; his cruelty to his brother Robert in his imprisonment, and to his nephew William, were enough to stamp him bad, notwithstanding his being called the "Lion of Justice." Certainly he did rid the country of rapine; but they might as well have called a worm-eaten wych-elm heart of oak—which would have been a contumely—and so my time-honoured father said; and he added, "His example was not such, in anything, as to improve a nation or individuals; and thus, though he favoured the Anglo-Saxons to a certain extent, and, with a view to his own interests, rather than theirs, granted them many privileges, the great lords, following his evil example, did as they listed, and so, as it turned out, did

the cruel Ralph, the lord of Caux." And the Old Oak added, "The loss of his son, the descendant of our Anglo-Saxon line of Alfred and Cerdic, on his return from Barfleur to England, was a just visitation. Well might he never smile again, as it was said he never did!"'

From a mixed conversation, and from remarks casually thrown out in this way, I am inclined to think that the date of this tale must be Henry I.'s time. Once also my Talking Friend seemed to hint at Robert de Belesme's retirement into Normandy. If he did, this gives a closer approximation to the time, as this the eldest son of Roger de Montgomery was at Burgh, Burg, or Bridgenorth in A.D. 1102, and was driven out of it, and into banishment, by the king.

But to proceed with the story.

'The Radman of Ruesset passed so frequently in this direction that he was, as was said above, known to all; and it was generally thought that, in some way or another, he greatly assisted in regulating the boundaries, or the marches, of the Cymry adjacent to the Caux *honour*, where certain Welshmen, as we called that ancient people, were employed in tilling the ground, and, as they paid rent, must have been tenants some way or another.

'Whether or not this was the case my father did not know; but he knew very well, from what he had heard continually, that the Radman of Ruesset was well beloved by the Welsh for his justice and his fair dealing.

'Shortly after one of his excursions down the valley of the Rea, which he always expressed himself extremely fond of, and especially of the lovely village of Hanwood, the Radman of Ruesset had to visit Wattlesburg, Wattlesborough, or, as it is called, you say, in "Domesday," *Wetesburg*, one of the possessions of the old Raven household; for I suppose Corbet, Corby, Rafn, Ralph, and Raven, after all, to be but one name. The Danes brought it with them from the north, and the Norse, of course, took it with them to Normandy.

'Upon this occasion his visit was not a pleasant one to himself—just the reverse. It was something like to what you would call "a distress," for he had to seize on the property, or châlcts, of the lord of Caux' tenant there; and he went,

to perform his lord's commands, but if he might, with mercy and compassion.

'And now it was that he saw, for the first time, the poor country maid of Wattlesborough, of whom he had heard so much under the title of "The Culver," or "The Dove"—but called Amie, or Emma, by the Normans, both, probably, the same names—and her two sisters, Lora and Lillian. Their mother was no more, and Gawen, their father, was bowed down with years, and a cripple. The stay of their home was their only brother Jaspar—bold as a lion and not easily controlled, but one who, owing to former kindnesses, had a regard for the Radman of Ruesset, though he did serve the lord of Caux.

'The meeting was as painful as the Radman's orders were decided. The old man Gawen, or Gowen, was to seek a home elsewhere with his daughters, under the protection of Jaspar. But he was not so summarily to be dealt with, and had no inclination to quit the inheritance of his fathers in haste. A fight ensued with the boors, and the Radman was unhorsed and wounded, and was sent back to the castle of Caux, not without some words of indignity. But as the Radman had no intent to be harsh, but only executed his lord's commands, even the sisters thought—especially Amie—that Jaspar had acted too hastily.

'The wrath of the lord of Caux on the Radman's return was fierce and furious, though his wounds proved to be of little consequence, and he made short work of the matter; and although the Radman was not the person sent to execute the order the second time, the home at Wattlesborough was burnt to the ground, Jaspar and Amie were brought off as hostages or prisoners, whilst Lora and Lillian managed to convey their aged father—who died a few days after—to the house of Eddert Bourlay of Willavestune, or Woolaston, himself a Norman, but one who had Saxon blood in his veins by his mother's side, she being a great-grand-daughter of Uluiet, who held Willavestune, or Woolaston, in Saxon times.

'Not far off from the homestead of Gawen was another border castle—a stronghold in Saxon days, and afterwards much strengthened by the Norman, as a protection from the

Cymry, with its four fair towers, and dungeon keep, and court, and dark well, to say nothing of its deep moat and drawbridge and grilled portcullis. The priest of Hanwood once told me that much stone was taken hence and used to build Alderbury Church ; but of this,' said my Talking Friend, 'I do not know much. I may add, however, that it is not far off from Luchetune, which you now call Loton, held, in my time-honoured father's early days, by Edric, but, when the Conqueror came in, consigned to the great Norman Earl of Montgomery, under whom Roger Fitz-Corbet held it, added afterwards, with Cardeston, to the fee of Wattlesborough—that is, as Mr. Eyton explained it, "to the feoffment of the younger branch of the Corbets which held Wattlesburgh."

'But if the orders of the lord of Caux were quick, they were also cruel and inhuman, according to the barbarous customs of those days, of which I have heard you speak so often, referring to the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle." And these orders were that Jaspar should be cast into the worm-dungeon at Wattlesborough, having been first blinded and emasculated, to be devoured or stung to death by serpents. For you are to understand that in our early times, as well as in those of the Normans, all toads, newts, blind-worms, common snakes, and adders (also called *orms* and *worms*) were thrown into the *oubliettes*—as such dungeons were called—and collected there, as a sort of terror. Happily, they could not live long without air and light, the toads excepted—and therefore supposed to be ugly and venomous—so that it was *but a terror*, though the throwing into the dungeon was a dreadful reality, for few that found their way there ever lived to find their way out again ; it was an exception when they did.

'And so into the dungeon was Jaspar cast, with little hope of life or escape. And his sister Amie, as she lamented his sad fate, said mournfully, in the presence of the Radman, who had charge of her, "One who was connected with the Saxon Torets should not have treated him so. It ill became a lord of Caux ; and Mabel of Alderbury could have had no hand in a deed so fell and cruel."

'Meanwhile, what was the situation of Amie herself—the poor country maid of Wattlesborough, the well-beloved of all

about her? She, too, was to suffer; but, unknown to herself, she had made a deep impression on the Radman of Ruesset, and he laboured, with the connivance, if not with the assistance, of the good Mabel, to protect her, though it was no easy matter.

'"Those chattering pyots," said the lord of Caux, "must be well looked to, or they will breed mischief. Lora and Lillian, they tell me, have sought refuge with that fellow Bourlay of Willavestune, and he, with so much Saxon blood in his Norman veins, is no friend to me or mine. One bush never suits two redbreasts. As for Gawen, dead men tell no tales, and he's well *earthed*"—our old term for burying,' interposed my Talking Friend, in a sort of parenthesis. "Dry those womanish tears, Mabel; this is a case in which I can brook no interference. My word's law."

'And Amie was taken, under the charge of the Radman, to a stronghold not far from Caux, and near to Westbury —Newton, my time-honoured father called the place, if I recollect aright, and the stronghold, or border-castle's name was Brow, with a deep moat about it, as was the custom. There Amie was taken, and there she was hid, and, apparently, her only attendant was an old woman of Stoney Stretton called a witch by her neighbours, and said to have conversed with demons, and to have had a cow-sucking bag, which, at her word of power, could fly about and suck milk from cows. One she was said to have been of three sisters, who, on coming to the cradle of a babe, could arrange all that should befall it hereafter. She was, in fact, a sort of a wise woman, and went by the name of Sibil.

'It certainly was a most out-of-the-way place, held under Roger de Montgomery in early days by one of the many Corbets of the Conqueror's train, but my time-honoured father forgot which, they were so many. Of the locality of the stronghold of Brow, however, there is no doubt, as Rainald de Henewede, or Hanwood, was often a visitor at the house of Oregot of Wineslega, or Winsley, not far off, and he spoke of the castle of Brow to the priest of Hanwood, who repeated his words beneath the shade of the Old Oak's boughs.

'Such was the heavy misfortune which had befallen the family of Gawen!

'It was not long, however, before the poor country maid of Wattlesborough found out that she must have a secret friend and well-wisher not far off, for the witch, as her neighbours chose to call her, was constantly bringing to her some little delicacy or another, which, she said, had been left for her; and after some time, when a sort of confidence had sprung up between herself and her attendant, to whose charge she seemed to be entirely left—though there were serfs, and villains, and retainers all round—the kindly old woman—but no witch—said unto her, "Fair maiden, you would never betray me, would you?" "Never!" replied Amie, blushing like a rose, and full of surprise. Upon which she gave into her hands a little round ball of gold with a small cross upon it (the priest of Hanwood said it was a *Bulla* from Byzantium, or Constantinople, but I don't know exactly,' said my Talking Friend, 'what a *Bulla* is), adding, with bated breath, "The Radman of Ruesset bade me deliver it into your hands, and into no one's but yours. *He* trusts me. *He* was good to me, and saved me when ignorant people would have drowned me in the roadside pool at Stoney Stretton, where the golden plover frequents, and whose melancholy note I love to hear. They never distress or harry me!"

'"The Radman of Ruesset!" said the poor distracted maiden. "And yet, methinks, on consideration, he never used an unkind word to me on the way here, and rebuked those who did, and sharply too. *He* can mean me no harm. The characters marked on his and Mabel's face are all for good!"

'"You may well say so," said the grateful Sibil, "and when he comes next I shall not fail to tell him that a tear started in that dear blue eye when I handed to you his token—the ball of gold he prized so much!"

'"Harm me not," replied the girl, "and put no temptation into my way. True enough, I am but a poor Saxon's child; but my days of heathendom are past this long, long while, and I can brook no insult. But why should I have any misgivings about the open-faced Radman of Ruesset?

Did I not say in my heart that Jaspar did him wrong, or at least did not give him his rights—he bore his wound so patiently, and insult too."

'It was the week following that he came, having to visit regularly such as were kept under watch and ward—a precaution very necessary in those times, when escapes and subsequent plots were dangerous. Sibil, the reputed witch, but in reality a kindly, suffering woman, soon informed the maiden of his arrival, saying, "The serfs are all at their tasks, and all is clear and safe. Shall I say that you are prepared to see him?" "*Yes!*" she replied; "though, in truth, as a prisoner, I have no power to say NO." And within a few minutes he entered her miserable chamber, but with a face on which there was not a line or feature to be mistrusted. Hard times had not hardened him.

'He was the first to break the silence, and he said, "Amie, all that one who loves you can do has been done to procure your liberty, but in vain. Nor was I alone in my entreaty. The good Mabel of Alderbury has done her best, but her prayers and my entreaties were unavailing in this case. The lord of Caux, who is a hard man and revengeful, persists in saying you must drag out a miserable existence in durance and captivity. But even yet, lady—for such thou art in heart and mind—I do not despair. At any rate, if I fail in procuring your liberty, I will either lose my own or my life. What good will my life do me if the joy of my life is sorrow-stricken?"

'What besides passed at this interview can only be conjectured; but when the Radman departed there were tears on the maiden's face, and Sibil said they were not the tears of sorrow, but rather tears of joy. And the poor persecuted woman became day by day more attached to her charge, and the Radman's commands were willingly attended to. "Do all that lies in your power for the maiden's comfort, but use a woman's caution, and avoid observation."

'During the Radman's absence bad news had reached the castle of Caux, and the lord of it was infuriated. Jaspar, mutilated and blinded, and, as was hoped, dead long ere this, had escaped from his *oubliette* at Wattlesborough and had fled,

none knew whither. The truth was that his eyesight, owing to the mercy of the executioner, had been spared (as it afterwards transpired), and his face had only been smeared with his own blood. Redspath, he declared—who owed him a good turn—did it cleverly. And the priest of Hanwood told me that this was a trick not unfrequently practised at Constantinople, where the heated glass, in clever hands, was exchanged for a cool one, and so the poor sufferer was spared. The Norman, however, generally wrenched out the eye, and Redspath's sleight of hand must have shown great dexterity.

'How long he remained in the dungeon he hardly knew, but one morning he seemed to discern a light at the end of it, and heard a rustling noise like the crackling of dried sticks. The fact was that it communicated with a great drain, no doubt long ago supposed to have been walled up, but which was now dry, and a fox had wormed his way *in* to see what he could get, and finding nothing to his purpose soon crept *out*. Jaspar was not slow to take the hint, and after examining the entrance cautiously, he thought he could escape by it, and did so the following night, though still sore from his severe mutilation, and suffering very great pain at every step he took.

'As he was given up for dead, no thought was taken of him for many months at least, when one morning two retainers of the lord of Caux, whom he spoke to familiarly by the names of Tucket and Paignel, came to Caux and told him that his late prisoner was scouring the Gordowr and inciting the Welsh tenantry to rebellion, adding that if he was not soon apprehended they could not answer for the consequences. A consultation (we should have called it a *mot*) was immediately held, and they were despatched with a band of armed serfs to take him if it were possible; at all events, they were to watch the movements of the suspected Bourlay of Woolaston, as you now call it, and its chapelry, and to bring what tidings they could of the sisters under his protection—that is to say, of Lora and Lillian.

'Rough and ready Normans were Tucket and Paignel, and forth they started, glad of such a bloody raid, as I have heard you and your brothers say the old mosstroopers were

of old time, when they sallied forth, with wild excitement and delight, to kill and to destroy, and to drive across the border their neighbours' flocks and herds.'

And no doubt my Talking Friend had heard us sing at the pitch of our voices, on our return from the Marsh and the Gordowr, where we had heard them read, these or other lines from Percy's 'Reliques of Ancient Poetry':—

> Yt felle abowght the Lamasse tyde
> Whan hosbonds wynn ther haye,
> The dowghtye Douglasse bowynd hym to ryde
> In Ynglond to take a praye.

Above all others I well recollect the stanzas following as our especial favourites, which recounted the names of 'thre yemen of the north countrey':—

> The one of them hight Adam Bel,
> The other Clym of the Clough,
> The thyrd was William of Cloudesley,
> An archer good ynough.
>
> They were outlawed for venyson,
> These yemen everych one;
> They swore them brethren upon a day,
> To Englyshe wood for to gone.

But to return to, and to take up, the thread of our story.

'These men had not come to the lord of Caux without having first informed themselves of the whereabouts of Jaspar. The truth was he had fled to his sisters, who were hidden, he knew, somewhere in the woody district of the Gordowr. Four-and-twenty armed retainers were put at the disposal of Tucket and Paignel, but when their lord wished to join the Radman of Ruesset to their troop they at once refused, adding suspiciously, "There would be little chance of success if he were with them, and that he was too chicken-hearted and tender-bowelled for the bloody work they had on hand; besides," said Paignel (pagan, every bone of him, my time-honoured father said), "he has a bird in a bower to look after, and, peradventure, wants looking after himself." And there was a malign leer and a malicious grin upon his measled and belepered features as he thrust out his

thin lean cheeks, with his great tongue, and even snapped his fingers in the presence of his lord.

'At these words the countenance of the lord of Caux was changed, and the Norman horseshoe showed itself on his brow as it gathered the raven's blackness, and they heard him grind his teeth, which were like a wild boar's. But it was no time for further parley, and the sound of the horse-hoofs rattled in the courtyard as the cavalcade rode off from the castle in search of its prey.

'It was a ride of some seven or eight miles at least, but as they knew their way, though it was thick and woody, they pricked on apace. Their object was to reach the lower grounds, which lie where is now the Middleton Hill, between the Breidden and the Moel-y-Golfa, before nightfall; for in that locality was the homestead of Bourlay, against whom they had a personal grudge; and their intent and purpose was to burn it to the ground, to take Jaspar and his sisters, Lora and Lillian, prisoners, and to slay the owner, whom they spoke of as little better than a Saxon dog, because, being a Norman by birth, he had secreted and protected the daughters of Gawen, forgetting all the while that the lords of Caux themselves were connected by marriage with the Saxon Torets, as they took care to forget upon all occasions when it suited their interests or served their purpose.

'Unhappily for Bourlay of Woolaston, the cruel schemes of Tucket and Paignel were soon accomplished. They surrounded his timber-built dwelling and the outhouses where his few retainers slept, set fire to them, and burnt them to the ground. So bright was the light of the fire that old Breidden and the Moel-y-Golfa were lighted up by it, and the cocks crew, thinking it was day. Bourlay, however, was not a person to yield without a fight—he was a man, indeed, of great strength and tried courage, and, like the Rob Roy you tell of, could button his galligaskins without stooping, which bespeaks his stature—and he and Jaspar and the women ensconced themselves in a sort of a cave of ragged overhanging rock close by, and there the two men fought desperately. Six or seven of the troopers, with Tucket at the head of them, fell either dead or mortally wounded. At

last, as he was wielding his double-handed sword against Paignel, Bourlay slipped, and before he could recover himself he was struck down by two of the retainers of Caux, and Lora, who was striving to protect him with more than even woman's constancy, received a dreadful wound in her head, fell forwards, and never breathed again.

'In the scuffle which followed, Jaspar, who had hardly yet recovered from his mutilation and severe treatment, was captured, struggling fiercely, however, and still dealing death-blows. Bourlay before he died, which was within half an hour after the fray was over, whispered something into the ear of Lillian—those that stood nearest said he counselled her to hide herself either in the fastnesses of the Berwyn or at the roots of the Moel-y-Golfa, where he had friends, or in the caves of Llanymynech. Whatever it was, she contrived to escape from the dreadful carnage, and the troopers and retainers had to return to Caux with Jaspar only, himself suffering from as many wounds as must have been the death of a less hardy person. And better had it been for him, poor wretch, had he died in the fight; for no sooner was he delivered up to the lord of Caux on their return than he commanded him to be hanged on a rood that same evening, saying to Paignel, "What would avail me the privilege of my free court, and my power of assizing bread and beer, of keeping *gallows*, and having *waifs and strays*, if I might not hang by the neck incontinently, without judge or jury, such a varlet and a scoundrel as this Jaspar? Saxon *nithing* was too good a name for him!"

'It may readily be supposed that the lord of Caux was wrath enough at the death of Tucket and his troopers, and he said, with his horseshoe scowl, "The crows and the ravens may pick Bourlay's bones and welcome, but it was ill-managed not to have secured the Saxon maidens; they would have done for some of our *meiny* at any rate, if not for thee, Paignel, to play with." And he answered with the same malign leer and malicious grin which has been mentioned before, "It's enough, methinks, that the Radman of Ruesset has his singing Saxon bird; there needs no more to corrupt our Norman blood!"

'"S'death, villain! what dost thou mean?" roared the infuriated lord of Caux. "Out with the truth, loon, or the devil damn thee black to all eternity! Jaspar yet dangles to the wind like an ill-boding kingfisher in the ingle corner, and thou mayst show thy legs yet to the Breidden or the Stiperstones if thou play'st me false, or allowest another to do so."

'Paignel was all unused to such an address as this, nor was he the man, when the time came, not to resent it. Meanwhile, with dilated nostril and the bitterest sneer, he said, "Look well to the Radman of Ruesset, and to his visits to Amie, at Brow—the sister of Lora, who can tell no tales, and of Lillian, who may. He's not the *unnithing* you take him for, and her captivity isn't so severe as you suppose. The bird can sing in her lonely cage, depend on't, and has good reason to do so. I wonder which of the two the Radman of Ruesset likes best—the Lady Mabel of Alderbury or the Saxon damsel in her bower?"

'And the Norman lord's blood boiled within him, and his wrath waxed higher and fiercer, and he said, in haste, "Thou hast been useful to me more than once, Paignel, or I had not brooked this. There is the promised reward; a Norman lord is true to his word; take it and begone! Recollect what the lord of Caux can and may do even yet if he is irritated beyond measure." And Paignel recollected it well, and heard the wind whistle through the clothes of Jaspar; but having no present power to avenge himself, he took good care to keep out of the way of the fierce lord, whose colour changed fitfully as he banned and blasphemed all about him.

'The next night but one poor Amie's sleep was disturbed by a voice under her lonely tower. She thought she recognised it—that it was the minstrel's, Luke de Barre—but she soon fell asleep, for she had had a day of unrest and painful forebodings. Presently she was awoke again—something struck against the grating, evidently with the intent to rouse her and arrest her attention. So she got off her pallet, and as she listened breathlessly she heard, in Norman-French—which she had learnt to understand in her childhood—words of warning like these:—

Gentle Maiden, list to me,
Mine 's no common minstrelsy :
Danger's near, be on thy guard ;
An enemy keeps watch and ward.
Next time the Radman comes to thee,
Bid him with all haste to flee.
'Tis Mabel warns thee, gentle maid,
The minstrel he his saye hath said.

These were all the words she heard, and, as you may suppose, from that hour the poor maid of Wattlesborough and sleep were strangers.

'As just above stated, heavy forebodings were on her heart before. Although she knew nothing of the death of one sister and the flight of the other, yet something fearful seemed round about her like a terrible mist, and she had no power mentally to escape from it. The minstrel's voice, of course, only increased these fears, and she prayed for comfort as the old priest of Alderbury had taught her to pray—for he was a good and merciful man, like the priest of Hanwood.

'But how was Mabel able to warn the poor girl ?

'In the fierceness of his wrath the lord of Caux had first burst out, like a thunderstorm, on his wife, and had taxed her with unfaithfulness, and declaring, with his Norman coarseness, that he would soon find means to stop the Radman's intrigues. "Once let me catch him on his return, and he leaves this castle of mine a man no more. One gallows, methinks, may serve for him and the recreant Jaspar! He might have been contented surely with the Saxon Amie." And again he banned and blasphemed outrageously. At that time, said my time-honoured father, the devil had so tied his knees with his tail that he could not have prayed, and had stuffed his head so far into his mouth that if he would he could not have given utterance to words of mercy.

'Never was woman so distressed as the good Mabel of Alderbury, all whose life almost had been spent in tempering her lord's rage, and in ministering to the necessities of her neighbours. Firm, however, of resolve, and strong in her purposes of good, she repelled the lord of Caux' slanderous charges with subdued indignation, and so awed him by the presence of injured virtue, that he first stood abashed, and

then sought refuge among his hawks and his hounds. Bold and imperious as he was, *he cowed in the pen*, as we Saxons speak, and was forced inwardly to confess that the Lady Mabel could command as well as he.

'She, however, knew his temper but too well, and as the Radman was away she determined, if possible, to warn the man through whom she had been the means of doing so much good in the neighbourhood, when her lord would have burnt up Saxon and Welsh tenants with fire and faggot. It was with this intent that she sent off the minstrel Luke de Barre—who was entirely devoted to her service—and by so doing she did all she could to put poor Amie on her guard.'

And the old oak, my Talking Friend, quivered all over as he added, 'I wish the rest of the tale were not so sad; but you shall hear it out as my time-honoured father told it me, saying, "An o'er sad tale and a heart-breaking one."

'Poor Amie was unable to convey the warning to the Radman. Unhappily, so intent was he on his lord's business, and so entirely unsuspicious, that on his way back upon this occasion he passed even Brow, and at once confronted the lord of Caux before his indignation had had time to subside. On entering the hall, and reaching the daïs, he spoke out as he was used to do, saying, "I have not drawn bridle, but have ridden in haste to tell the lord of Caux that Paignel, whom he has trusted so long and employed so much, has declared at a *mot* of his own summoning that he will either die or be avenged. He may be expected at any time, perhaps openly, but more probably in the dark, and by stealth, for he is a craven and a coward. Summon the retainers, and guard well the passages."

'"Wretch!" roared the Norman lord, "he has been beforehand with thee, and, traitor as thou art, thou shalt meet the traitor's doom—hampered in thine own hemp. Away with him at once, but mind first to use the pincers and the knife; if he dies a man, may I die a dog of a Saxon!" And, pitiful as it is to tell, they hurried him to the gallows-tree, and hung him unshrived and unhouselled before he could speak a word with the Lady Mabel.

'Such was the horrible cruelty and injustice of those days

when so many lords and barons had the right of gallows, and it pained my venerable father much to think that many an oak might have been polluted and stained by the pitiful and miserable deaths of very innocent people like the Radman.

'But the horrors of the story are not yet completed. Certainly the good Radman of Ruesset's death was presently avenged, for that selfsame night the lord of Caux was strangled in his bed, and, strange to say, without any noise having reached the lady's chamber, which was at the other end of the corridor, as the Normans called it. There must, however, have been a fearful struggle in that lonely room of death, for his was not the only corpse found there. Paignel also was laid on the floor, grim and dead, and with his mouth wide open; and by him lay a minstrel's staff and a harp broken into twenty pieces, the strings all loose and snapped asunder, and the pegs torn out of their holes.

'The next morning all came to light, and the poor minstrel Luke de Barre was found dying in the courtyard. All he could state was—and he died in saying it—that he was faithful to the last: that he had found his lord and master strangled in the sleeping-chamber, and the wicked Paignel, with his back to him, gloating over his blue-pale face; that he struck the wretch over and over again with the harp, and all-to broke his skull, before he had time to turn upon him; but that after he had inflicted the fatal blow there was a struggle, and that in the contest he had received an inward hurt; and that he rejoiced he lived to let his lady know that he had done what he could to protect her lord, the owner of the *honour* of Caux. His last words were, "Oh, that Amie may be safe! Some good spirit comfort her, for she loved the Radman well; and if ever man deserved to be loved, and to be loved well, it was that large-hearted, generous, humane, and trusty man."

'The lord of Caux deserved no better fate, for he was barbarously inhuman and little better than an everyday murderer or common hangman; but all the country round, from the Gordowr to ancient Scrobbesbyrig, bewailed and lamented the death of the Radman of Ruesset, uttering curses loud and deep on the memory of Ralph de Caux. None was

better known, none was more deservedly beloved for tenderness, kindness, and consideration in the execution of rough duties, when such traits of character were few and far between.

'And the trusty minstrel's words fell not to the ground. The lady of Caux took charge of Amie and of Lillian, who was brought home to her sister from the fort of the Moel-y-Golfa, where she had been secreted by a kindly *villain*. In Saxon times there had been an old church at Alderbury with a cell or two attached—long previous to the present church, and to what was called the Priory—and here, close by, dwelt Amie and Lillian, the constant friends of the lady of Caux, who continued till the day of her death to occupy apartments in the castle—a most unusual occurrence—having earned and deserved the excellent name of

'THE GOOD MABEL OF ALDERBURY.

'It is said,' continued my Talking Friend in concluding his tale, 'that Amie married into the Corbet family, and that the Saxon blood in the veins of their descendants came through her and the Torets, whose names have been alluded to more than once. What became of Lillian my time-honoured father did not know, but she was believed to have married amongst the Gordowr; and if so, her blood may be found in the veins of some Welsh family, not, perhaps, unconnected with the *honour* of Caux.'

To which my Talking Friend only added, 'There is little to choose in these early days between Saxon and Norman barbarities; and you may thank your stars, or, what is better, as the priest of Hanwood said, give thanks continually, that you and your brothers did not live in such days, but in days when you may walk in safety by the waters of the Rea from its source in Marton Pool to its junction with the Severn at Shrewsbury, having fertilised this lovely valley—"HAPPY VALLEY," you may well add, when you call to mind the tender reminiscences of childhood.'

And I bethought me of the lines of the great Roman poet—

> Accipe nunc Danaûm insidias, et crimine ab uno
> Disce omnes.

But, as the last remark of my Talking Friend rung like music in the ear, I could not but think likewise of those tender lines of Wordsworth's—

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky :
So was it when my life began ;
So is it now I am a man ;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die !
The child is father of the man ;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Having heard so much of the Castle of Caux, Caus, or Cause, in the above tale, it may not be uninteresting to the local reader to have laid before him the following passage from Eyton's 'Antiquities,' so often referred to :—

'CAUS CASTLE.

'Our history has at length brought us to the first of those border castles which for two centuries after "Domesday" served its continuous purposes of aggression or defence. From the ruins of Caus Castle we obtain no evidence as to its date, and but a shadowy idea of the arrangement of its parts. The masonry which remains, massive though it be, is nothing but the rubble, or filling in, of walls whose facings have long since been removed. We trace the site of a massive keep and the situation of an enormous well ; two prime necessities, the last perhaps less obvious than the first ; but in cases of sudden irruption of the Welsh the inhabitants of the district—men, women, and children—were wont to seek refuge in these castles. There are reasons for thinking that the very cattle were not excluded. Imagine a fortress, thus crowded, and in a state of siege, and what word of terror can have equalled that which sometimes announced the castle well to be dry ?

'The site of Caus Castle seems to have been well selected for its object. The inherent strength of the position, the large building area, the wide command of prospect—especially of that important pass which we may call the VALLEY

OF THE REA—these are features which tell of dangers and designs too manifold for the pages of history and too complex for the tongue of tradition. Exposed to all the turmoil of a hostile frontier, here dwelt the eldest of the two English sons of Corbet the Norman. On the right hand were the mountain fastnesses of Powis-land; on the three other sides Roger Fitz-Corbet's position was immediately or remotely backed by the strongholds and the manors of his own English vassals or of his brother, the Lord of Longnor. Further off in front, looking over Minsterley and Worthen and across the valley of the Rea, the eye rests on the Forest of the Stiperstones, once a chase of Saxon kings, but appropriated, with all its rights as a Norman forest, by the Barons of Caus'—so called from the *pays de Caux*, in Normandy.

Such is the locality on which we have so long dwelt, a locality well known to myself and to my brothers in our boyhood, and never to be forgotten.

And, as many Norman names have been mentioned in the above narrative, it may be mentioned here, in passing, that, compared with Celtic, Roman, Saxon, and Danish ones, the Normans left behind them in England generally, and in Shropshire particularly, few *names of places*. In this respect certainly the Saxons held their own; and to this my Talking Friend frequently adverted. It was natural that the Saxon should love to hear the names he heard in his childhood, and it was one triumph, at least, to put out the Norman's name from his remembrance.

> As for some dear familiar strain
> Untired we ask, and ask again,
> Ever in its melodious store
> Finding a spell unheard before.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MEDIÆVAL CHURCH.

Who knows his master's will, and doth it not,
Shall suffer many stripes, full well I wot.
GREEN'S *Looking-glass for London and England*, i. 110, Dyce.

Pereunt cum pastoribus greges, quia sicut populus, sic sacerdos.—S. HIERON. *Epist.* cxxviii. *ad Gaudent.* i. 959, D.

Non tonsura facit monachum, non horrida vestis,
Sed virtus animi perpetuusque rigor :
Mens humilis, mundi contemptus, vita pudica,
Junctaque sobrietas : hæc faciunt monachum.
S. ANSELM, *Carmen de Contemptu Mundi.*

Sed nescio quomodo, etiamsi aqua plena sit, tamen eundem odorem lagena servat, quo dum rudis esset, imbuta est.—S. HIERON. *Epist.* x. *ad Paullum*, tom. i. 24, c. Cf. Hor. *Epist.* I. ii. 69.

Nunc vero tantum veste mutata pristina non mutatur ambitio.—S. HIERON. *ad Eustoch. Epist.* xxii. tom. i. 98, C.

THERE must have been an unmistakable heartiness about the time-honoured Old Oak, for he loved his native place, and the banks of the Rea, and the neighbouring hills and woods, and the Severn, and the old town of Scrobbesbyrig—as it was now commonly called—beyond all Amwythig besides; and if the Cymry, as they passed beneath his boughs—the palladium of ancient owls—would descant on the great age of Dylluan (for by that name, or Tylluan, they called this wiseacre bird that stands so thoughtfully on Athenian coins), telling marvellous stories of his destinies, the old heart of oak could have told them stories equally strange, and would willingly have done so could they have understood his language: but of late years he had been so long used to the Anglo-Saxon speech that he scarcely understood the Welsh. Moreover (as we say of the French, and as

they say of us) they talked so quick that he could not keep up with them in his latter days; for it was long since old Tredithic had died, and he was his last intimate friend among the Cymry. Acquaintances he had in plenty amongst those who journeyed towards Trê-Valdwyn, or Montgomery, as well as amongst those who bought their ponies and their flannels from Welshpool; but friends, he said, like Tredithic were rarely found in advanced years. And I suppose all of us, who are *old boys* now, must admit the truth of his words; for

> Old experience doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain.

'But,' said my Talking Friend, 'amongst all the places my time-honoured father used to talk of most, Cruck Meole, and Hanwood, and Pontesbury stood prominent—Hanwood especially, for he, like myself, was greatly attached to many of its priests, as, indeed, he was to several of those of Pontesbury also. The fact is there was always a close and intimate connection between these two parishes; some, indeed, have gone so far as to say that Hanwood was subject to Pontesbury, but I never heard my aged father say so, and I never myself recollect it to have been so, though it was always considered to be in the deanery of Pontesbury. It was his delight also to speak of the high grade of principle in these places, considering those early times when the county, to say the least, was wild and the people uncultivated. "We needed no bolts nor bars here," he would say with honest pride, "and we were as hospitable as honest."'

And I called to mind that this was the case at Meole far after the years of my childhood; and it is a pleasant thing to recollect it now when men put on

> A mask ordained to candy o'er their sin,
> To gild the pills of poison with delight,
> And strew with roses deadly aconite.

Of the many early priests of Hanwood of whom my Talking Friend made mention as known to his time-honoured father I do not call to mind any with Saxon names. Usually he spoke of the priest that was in those days; and very probably such priests were not altogether stationary, but came

and went as necessity might call them. But, as has been mentioned more than once before, the time-honoured oak declared that education in the valley of the Rea was never at so low an ebb as has sometimes been supposed.

'Ordric the priest, who in A.D. 1075 baptised and stood sponsor for the historian Ordericus, was probably incumbent of Atcham. If so,' says Mr. Eyton, 'he is perhaps the earliest parish priest that can be named for *any locality* in Shropshire.' I have put the italics as corroborating the view just taken, that the priests in early Saxon times, as in later ones amongst the itinerant mendicants and others, still passed on from place to place; as, for instance, from Hanwood to Pontesbury, from Pontesbury to Minsterley, and so on to Westbury or Worthen.

'As far as my recollection goes,' added my Talking Friend, 'the first priests of Norman name mentioned by my aged father were Reginald de Hanewode and Walter de Pontesburie; but it was of the Saxon ones that he spoke most reverentially as men who, many of them, filled their posts well and did their duty faithfully. My own recollections, of course, can refer only to, comparatively speaking, later days; but I have known many good men and true, and the sound of the waters of my native Rea is not sweeter than this memory in my ears.'

On turning to 'Domesday' the reader will find Hanwood closely connected with the lord of Caus, a name which will be familiar to him from the preceding chapter.

'Domesday,' says Mr. Eyton, notices this manor as follows:—

'The same Roger (Fitz-Corbet) holds Hanewde (of the East). Edic (probably Edric) held it (in Saxon times), and was free. Here are ii hides, geldable. In demesne there is half an ox team, and (there are) v serfs, iii villeins, and ii boors with $2\frac{1}{2}$ teams; and there might be one team more thereon. Its former and present value was and is 10*s.* (*per annum*).'

Such is the statement in 'Domesday,' but it leaves us much uninformed; for the value, or rather the extent, of the '*hide*' is very hard to come at. There is no doubt whatever

that it varied to a great extent in different counties. In Shropshire Mr. Eyton is inclined to think that it equalled something more than 240 statute acres. Whatever it was in extent, it always, I believe, contained four virgates. Whatever the Shropshire hide was, it is clear from 'Domesday' that Hanwood contained two which were *geldable*: that is to say, subject to Danegeld, or, as it afterwards came to signify, to the ordinary dues and payments of the hundred. At the present time the parish of Hanwood contains about 450 acres. Little Hanwood certainly was amongst the 'xiv Berewicks of Ford,' and there is very little doubt that the ground on which the manufactory colleges stand was in the parish of Ford: they are now, however, reckoned in the parish of Hanwood, and the point appears to be conceded.

What a pithy saying was that of our learned Selden—'When the priests come into a family they do as a man that would set fire on a house; he does not put fire to the brick wall, but thrusts it into the thatch. They work upon the women, and let the men alone.' Is not this what we see every day? Did not celibacy increase it? Hence it was that Luther said in his 'Table Talk,' in which he so frequently touches on this subject, 'On what pretence can man have interdicted marriage, which is a law of nature? 'Tis as though we were forbidden to eat, to drink, to sleep. That which God has ordained and regulated is no longer a matter of the human will, which we may adopt or reject with impunity. 'Tis the most certain sign of God's enmity to popedom that He has allowed it to assail the conjugal union of the sexes.'

'But nothing of this sort was known in early Saxon days, and my time-honoured father,' said my Talking Friend, 'well recollected the evils which resulted on the introduction of a different system. Formerly—that is, in his fresh years—the intercourse of the priesthood and the laity was of the closest possible order; and although he had known many evil priests who led evil lives, yet had he known more good ones, who, with their wives and families, were an example and a blessing. There was one in Saxon times of whom he frequently made mention, and always with the fondest recollections. He went

in and out amongst the people like a domestic cat, and the sound of his footfall was as pleasant as the sound of his harp. He was, indeed, a great musician, and the harp he used was a Welsh one. Very well do I recollect my aged father saying that after the death of his wife, who lived with him till he was old, the sounds of it became softer and softer till it seemed to rival the water as it rippled over the shallows of the Rea on a summer's eve. Some say that fish have no ears (which I don't believe), but anyways they have a very quick sight; and so used were they, whether to the sight of this man of God or to the sound of his harp, that they never withheld their course on the shallows as he passed and repassed in solemn meditation. "This," said the time-honoured Oak, "I frequently heard asserted beneath my shade, to which the people added, 'If we had passed that way the trouts would have darted off for their pools as quick as the kingfisher or as the lightning.'"' I often asked my Talking Friend for his name, but he either never knew it or it had passed away; as that which is best will pass away, leaving scarce a record on earth—written down, however, no doubt, in the writing of God and in the records of heaven!

I applied some modern lines I had recently read to the memory of this ancient priest, as I fancied him going in and out amongst a primitive people, his footsteps '*shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*' which he preached.

To each he gives his golden smile,
For all are known to him—
From childhood bright as apple-bloom
To old age hoar and dim.

For think not toil and that fierce strife
Which sometime labour brings
Have blurred the beauty of his life,
Or lost him happier things.

But rather hath he ta'en a zest
From this his hard employ,
As 'twere a whetstone at the heart,
To give an edge to joy.

At any time and in any nation—Saxon, Norman, or other—such men as these must be for a comfort and a blessing. To

them the altar was, as the old Norse of Iceland called it, the 'Paxspialld,' the very table of peace, which they loved and propagated. Men of this holy cast, of whom the world knew nothing, or little at the most, could have answered the question by their life and conversation, 'If the bishops, the torches of that time, were thus dimme—*ipsæ tenebræ quantæ!*—what light was to be looked for at the litel candels, the soule priestes, and sely Sir Johns?'

Whereupon I bethought me of the Saxon and Norman hierarchy, and resolved that I would put a question or two to my Talking Friend on the subject. For although, as Bishop Andrews said, 'such tinder is in our nature that every little spark sets us on fire; our nature hath grown so light that every little thing puffeth us up and sets us aloft in our altitudes presently'; yet hath God taken charge for His people, and there are miracles of Divine mercy every day, though we see them not, and there are thousands, elect and chosen, who never have bowed their knee to Baal.

> By their guise
> Just men they seemed, and all their study bent
> To worship God aright, and know His works
> Not hid; nor those things last which might preserve
> Freedom and peace to man.

A day or two after it so chanced that I was speaking of my lamented friend Bishop Butler—one who left so good a name behind him—and that led me to ask my Talking Friend whether or not his time-honoured father ever spoke of the Saxon and Norman hierarchy. He replied at once that although these parts in early days were not often honoured by the visit of a bishop, yet bishops were a constant subject of remark; and they were spoken of by the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury, without any reserve, beneath his shade.

I must throw together these reminiscences, remarking, as I pass on, that it is a pleasant thing to find only good names recorded. All that is bad seemed to have passed away like dross or the scum of the furnace. And I thought of some old lines I had read in some old book or another:—

> Et rosa de radice rosæ, de religione
> Religio, pietas de pietate fluit.

And I picked out at once that the time-honoured Oak had been no common listener, and I was, at the same time, obliged to confess that the memory of my Talking Friend was not an everyday one; for had I recorded all he told me, these pages would have been filled to overflowing.

And first, the time-honoured Oak had heard all about the arrival of St. Augustine from the successive priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury: how he wished to introduce ordinances contrary to those of the ancient British Church; and how, though he greatly civilised the heathen Saxons, the old British bishops declined receiving him as their archbishop from Rome, and would keep their Easter, as they had been accustomed, according to the rites of the Eastern Church, from whence they had received their early faith. His time-honoured father would also add that he had heard tell of St. Augustine's Oak, but he did not seem to know exactly where it was, though reported to be in Worcestershire; and he constantly affirmed that a wide distinction must be made between the British Church and that portion of the Anglo-Saxon Church which was latterly impregnated with the erroneous teaching introduced from Rome.

From the same source—that is to say, from the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury, and their friends at Wenlock and Shrewsbury—he had heard the history of Paulinus, the first Archbishop of York, for the details of which I must refer the curious reader to that very valuable compilation, the 'Fasti Eboracenses,' recently published.

It was said in an earlier chapter of this work that the Old Oak, in the days of his oaklingship, constantly heard of the name of the good Bishop Chad, 'one of those holy and apostolic men,' says the author of the 'Fasti Eboracenses,' 'of whom the early Church had so much reason to be proud.' Amongst other legends which he knew so well, he had frequently heard Britnod and Turchil, from the Forest of Arden, who had Saxon friends living at Pulverbatch, recite that of 'Wulfade and the Hart,' which before its destruction in 1603 was told in nine of the old windows in the west cloister at Peterborough.

The hart brought Wulfade to a well
That was besyde Seynt Chaddy's cell.
Wulfade askyd of Seynt Chad,
'Where is the hart that me hath lad?'
'The hart that hither thee hath brought,
Is sent by Christ that thee hath bought.'
Wulfade prayed Chad, that ghostly leech,
The faith of Christ him for to teach.
Seynt Chad teacheth Wulfade the fayth,
And words of baptism over him sayth.
Seynt Chad devoutly to mass hym dight,
And haileth Wulfade Christy's knight.

Wulfade induces his brother Rufin to be baptised, and the end is that the brothers were surprised by their father in Chad's cell and were killed by him. Remorse, however, followed, and the penitent sire adopted the faith of his murdered children at the instance of Ermenilda, his queen.

Wulfen contrite hyed hym to Chad,
As Ermenyld him counselled had.
Chad bade Wulfen for his sin
Abbeys to build his realm within.
Wulfen endued, with high devotion,
The abbey of Brough with great possession.

'And when he had recounted the legend,' said my Talking Friend, 'he would add that Chad and Trithona of Canterbury—who changed his name to *Deusdedit*, so as not to offend the Jutes of Canterbury—were the first *native* bishops who held their own after the introduction of new-fangled ideas from Rome.'

And the old priest above referred to would tell the time-honoured Oak of one bishop—surnamed Benedict—who brought into England freemasons and glaziers from Gaul, the instructor and the patron of the learned Bede—in after ages called 'the Venerable'—and of the history of Wilfrid and Lindisfarne, or Holy Isle; of Hagulstade, or Hexham; of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and those regions of the north where so bright a light was kindled, reaching throughout Mercia. And he would say how the people of the north despised the papal seal of lead—which we now call a bulla, or bull—rejoicing in their own Saxon signatures, the rood token, or sign of the cross. At the same time, contrasting

the humility of Chad with the somewhat haughty bearing of Wilfrid, notwithstanding all his learning and accomplishments, he would add, 'The retreat of the latter amongst the South Saxons, and their conversion, and the establishment of the see of Selsey, or the Seals Island (now the bishopric of Chichester), is one of the prettiest stories of those days. I don't know,' continued the old priest, as he brushed a tear from his eyelashes, 'if the story of the death of Bede is prettier, touching as it is.'

And I bethought me of that beautiful description of his death by his pupil Cuthbert—who was with him to the last, and closed his eyes—given by old Fuller in his own peculiar style, not, however, so simply as in the original, to which the learned reader is referred. 'One of the last things he did was the translation of the gospel of St. John into English. When death seized on him one of his devout scholars, whom he used for his secretary or amanuensis, complained, "My beloved master, there remains yet one sentence unwritten." "Write it, then, quickly," replied Bede; and summoning all his spirits together, like the last blaze of a candle going out, he indited it and expired. Thus God's children are immortal while their Father hath anything for them to do on earth; *and death, that beast, cannot overcome and kill them, till first they have finished their testimony* (Rev. xi. 7); which done, like silkworms, they willingly die when their web is ended, and are comfortably entombed in their own endeavours. Nor have I ought else to observe of Bede save only this: a foreign ambassador, some two hundred years since, coming to Durham, addressed himself first to the high and sumptuous shrine of St. Cuthbert. "If thou beest a saint, pray for me;" then, coming to the plain, low, and little tomb of Bede, "Because," said he, "thou art a saint, good Bede, pray for me."'

> Sublime recluse!
> The recreant soul that dares to shun the debt
> Imposed on human kind must first forget
> Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use
> Of a long life; and, in the hour of death,
> The last dear service of thy passing breath.

But to proceed with my Talking Friend's remarks of his

time-honoured father's reminiscences. 'He would speak,' he continued, 'of Ina, king of Wessex, of his journey to Rome, and of the school he established there, and of the Rome-scot, which was never intended to be turned into Peter's pence. It was a barefaced robbery of the school. Then he would tell of Adhelm, bishop of Sherborne, who used to sit with his harp in his hand on the bridge of the Avon, and led the people on from common to holy music, and to the Psalms of David. And whenever he mentioned this good man's name the murmuring of his leaves was like the choking of a man's voice when surcharged with overmuch sorrow, and he seemed to say, "This Adhelm must have been the very double of the good old priest on the Rea who charmed the very trouts on the shallows, besides being the comfort of all within his reach."

'He would also tell of Egbert and Albert, both learned and eminent bishops of York, and of their great pupil, Alcuin; and he seemed to take a pleasure in contrasting with such excellent names as the above the name of Offa, king of Mercia. "Better," he would say with desperation, "their stand and bulwark against vice than Offa's dyke; better alway the names of good men than of great conquerors! Did not the good priest always say, '*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*'?"

'He had heard of St. Swithin of Winchester, and knew the legend, which he had been told was later than the humble bishop's days; and he loved to hear tell of Ethelwulph, and of Alfred's—his youngest son's—revenge on the Danes for their pillage and destruction of the monasteries. It had grieved the old priest's heart—and that enlisted all the Old Oak's sympathies—to hear of the wail that arose from the sacking and the burning of Beverley, and Ripon, and Whitby, and Lastingham, and Jarrow, and Hexham, and Lindisfarne, of Croyland and of Peterborough. What is said of Lindisfarne in your "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" may be said, more or less, of all: "The havoc of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church at Lindisfarne, through rapine and slaughter."' This was the sixth of the Ides of January (i.e. the 8th) *Anno* 793.

The same old priest had said much in the Old Oak's hearing of St. Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, A.D. 943—whose name has been before referred to—and greatly misliked his change of the rules of St. Basil for those of Benedict; but he spoke in the highest terms of grand old Turketil, abbot of Croyland, though by extraction a Dane, because he devoted all he had to its restoration, rejoicing to find amongst its three old remaining monks the silver-haired Thurgar, who had been saved by Sidroc as a child, when the desolation of the Danes fell upon the home, A.D. 870. He it was that had cast for the abbey the wonderful bell 'Guthlac' (called after Ethelbert's Guthlac, the first Saxon hermit, in honour of whose memory the king built this monastery), compared with which the kindly old priest would add, 'Our St. Winifreda's bell at the abbey in Shrewsbury was but as a hand or a low bell.'

In passing on to Norman times, I must not omit to mention that it appeared to be a great source of distress to the Old Oak, and therefore to the old priest, his friend, that Siricius, archbishop of Canterbury, should have recommended the tax called Danegeld—whence the common term '*geldabilis*' in 'Domesday.' And I called to mind the words in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' *Anno* 991: 'And in that year it was first decreed that tribute should be paid to the Danish men on account of the great terror which they caused by the sea-coast. That was at first ten thousand pounds. That counsel first advised Archbishop Sigeric.' From which undeniable testimony it appears again that the memory of the Old Oak did not fail him.

As regards the Norman hierarchy, I noticed particularly that the time-honoured Old Oak looked to it with far less interest than to the Saxon. It is clear that all old memories went back towards the time when he was an oakling. Is it Landor who, somewhere or another, says?—

> Those who have laid the harp aside,
> And turned to idler things,
> From very restlessness have tried
> The loose and dusty strings;
> And, catching back some favourite strain,
> Run with it o'er the chords again.

I noted also that in all the communications with my Talking Friend it was chiefly to archbishops that he referred —no doubt because they were men of mark and repute in their day, and therefore likely to be talked over by priests and clerks beneath his father's time-honoured shade. Of neighbouring prelates he had certainly very little to say. Of Lichfield and Coventry (as we now speak) I only recollect his mentioning Roger de Clinton, A.D. 1129, 30 Henry I.; Walter Durdent, who died at Rome, A.D. 1149, 14 Stephen; and Walter de Langton, 1296, 24 Edward I., a man of many troubles. As connected with Worcester, he on one occasion mentioned Dunstan, which I thought strange; but on referring to documents I find that he was correct, for Dunstan was translated to Canterbury the very same year he was consecrated Bishop of Worcester. Again, as relating to Hereford—'the diocese,' said my Talking Friend, with a pleasant shake of his leaves, 'in which I now stand, and in which, with my friend the Shelton oak, I may be looked upon as no mean chronicler'—I can only call to mind his alluding to Robert Loringa, or Robert of Lorrain, A.D. 1079, 14 William I., the friend of Wolfstan, and three several Ffoliots, one and all in some way or another connected with Shrewsbury.

Of the two Norman archbishops, Lanfranc and Anselm, and of a third, more than even of these two—that is to say, of Thomas à Becket—the time-honoured Old Oak seemed to know and to have heard more than of any other of the early hierarchy of that race, though the old priest had often spoken to him of the profound scholarship of Stephen Langton. The same old priest of Hanwood, whom the Old Oak loved so well—as I was able enough to make out—was quite of the opinion of a modern writer, that 'the years which elapsed between William the Conqueror and Henry III., between Lanfranc and Stephen Langton, between "Domesday Book" and Magna Charta, between Gregory VII. and Innocent III., are among the most eventful years in the history of Europe, and especially in the history of England.'

One thing was to be observed, especially whenever the Old Oak spoke of the Norman bishops, which was this. He

never mentioned them—no, not even Anselm—as men of God and holiness equal to their Saxon predecessors. The strong hand brought them in, and they themselves used the spell of the strong hand, if not the strong hand literally, on all occasions. Nor do I think the old priest so often mentioned could have made so able a defence for them as the pleasant writer of their lives, above referred to, when he said, 'The present generation may be offended at seeing archbishops acting as judges, as viceroys, as soldiers; but the question whether by shrinking from these offices in their own time they could have performed the duty which they owed to their fellow-men can only be answered by those who have duly considered the circumstances under which they were placed, the difficulties with which they had to contend, and the principles which were at the time universally received as true—in one word, the spirit of the age.' Where would the spirit of the age lead us now? Is not the spirit of the age visible in volumes like Dr. Colenso's? But I must not be too critical.

'Very evil days, indeed,' said the old priest beneath the shade of this venerable oak, 'were the early Norman ones; and it was well that the churches and monasteries were still looked upon as of old time the Cities of Refuge were. A Plantagenet, in the springtide of his ungovernable wrath, would ban and blaspheme against priest or layman, but his hand seemed to be stayed by some unseen power when he got within the ranges of the sanctuary. And it was well even for Lanfranc at times that it was so, or he and his suffragans might have rued it.' The old priest's opinion of Lanfranc was that he was something of a courtier, but he considered him, nevertheless, to be a light in his generation, and, maugre the envy of many of his opponents, a good, a learned, and a prudent man.

One bright summer's day my brothers and I were speaking of our lending libraries, and of the new fountains in London and elsewhere, when suddenly I heard that rustling of the leaves of my Talking Friend which betokened speech.

'Very wise are you all,' said he, half in humour, wholly in earnest, 'at least in your own conceits; but neither your-

selves nor the times you live in are the originators of *all* that is good. For I very well recollect the old priest telling my father—who listened with the attentiveness of age—how much he thought the establishment of lending libraries, when MSS. were scarce, turned to the praise of Lanfranc. Indeed, you little think in these days how often you have been anticipated in your work—ready as many of you are to work, and to do your work well. It was a Norman prelate at Canterbury who first did what you are now doing, just as it was a Saxon king—Edwin—who preceded you in the erection of drinking fountains for the refreshment of the wayfarer.'

And true enough was the remark. The matter of the drinking fountains has been referred to before in these pages. The establishment of lending libraries may be seen in the *Decreta pro Ordine Benedicti*; but though Lanfranc's works are before me I will give the account from his able biographer: 'More practical was Lanfranc's own regulation with respect to a lending library. At the beginning of Lent the librarian was directed to collect the books and spread them upon a carpet, except those which were given out during the preceding year. He then called over the names of the brethren, and each, as his name was pronounced, restored the book which he had received. If anyone was conscious of not having read the book, he was to prostrate himself before the abbot, declare his fault, and ask for pardon. Then the librarian assigned to each brother another book, and after their distribution he handed over to the chapter a list of the books lent and of the persons to whom they had been allotted.' Such is the pleasant account; on which, however, it is to be remarked that it was the monks who in those days were the readers, whereas now every little child can obtain the New Testament and the Prayer Book, each beautifully printed, at *twopence* apiece. We do not, I am afraid, half know either our advantages and opportunities or our responsibilities.

It would take up, however, too much space if I were to recount all that was said to me by my Talking Friend about the early Norman hierarchy. One great name, nevertheless, must not be passed by—a name to which, for his stalwart prowess

and military feats (as, for instance, when in the war of Toulouse he unhorsed and made captive Engelram de Trie), the time-honoured Old Oak gave all due praise, though he disliked his principles. 'There was heart of oak,' he would say, 'in the proud prelate, and his courageous bearing in life and in death was not to be disparaged.' And, indeed, he wanted not many defenders; for, as Peter Langtoft says in his 'Chronicle'—

> Well mayntend he holy kirk, and alle the dignite
> With the lawe to wirke mayntend he ordine.
> If any man mad pleynt of clerk for hastinesse,
> Or if thei were atteynt in other wikkednesse,
> Thomas suffered nouht clerke to be alle schent,
> Ne to the lay courte be brought to tak their jugement,
> But lithe holy kirk, of whom he hau the merke,
> And at that lawe to werke, if he were ordaynd clerke.
> The kyng for that cheson wrathed with Thomas.

This contest I have told elsewhere, in his Life, and there is not space to repeat it here; I will, therefore, only give the next words of the old 'Chronicle,' which, when we look to the times, and the men of those times, is close to the truth:—

> Clerkes often tide misdo blithely,
> For deynoushede, and pride, and for ther state is hy:
> Thei passe mesure and right, for to haf their wille,
> And whan thei ere in myght, wille thei kepe no skille.
> For thei will underfeng a fulle gre emprise,
> And susteyn it with wrong, with sleiht, and quaintise.

And hence it was that the priest of Pontesbury discussed the line of conduct which Becket had adopted, and expressed himself freely on the subject beneath the shade of the time-honoured oak; and the introduction of the *scutage* in 1159—so called because paid on each knight's *shield* for a mercenary, as we pay now for a militia substitute—only added to his surprise. And he said, 'Should the clergy pay scutage? Is military service to be exacted from those whose calling is the Church Militant, and who have hard enough battles to fight with the unruly wills and affections of sinful men? Is not Becket betraying us after all his protestations? What will he do when he becomes archbishop, which, in course of time,

he is sure to be? for his only aim is to mingle with the nobles of the land, and his pride and ambition are unbounded.'

In all this, possibly, the priest of Pontesbury was right, and the old priest of Hanwood admitted it; but he did not entirely agree with his spiritual brother on the Rea side, and gave Becket credit for much more sincerity and reality in the days of his prosperity and adversity; in fact, even if at times proud, haughty, and turbulent, he thought him the friend of the Church, when every man's hand in power was against it, with Henry at the head of them; and therefore, as far as he might, he would defend him on all occasions. And it was from the priest of Hanwood that the Old Oak took his cue, and would manfully defend Becket as a man whose heart was in the right place. In all of which, no doubt, there was a great deal of prejudice, but the Old Oak's love for heart of oak was unalterable, and he never gave up his opinions to the last; and when Becket died at the altar, by the hands of murderers, he told the priest of Pontesbury that he died at his post, as a *man* ought to do. 'With his shrine, and the mummeries enacted there, and with the offerings made at it,' said the venerable tree, 'I have nothing to do. I have lived through ages of darkness, and rejoiced when the Reformation came; but I must give every man his due.' And a very sensible old oak, in my opinion, he was, and an honest one too. Happy, however, these old priests that lived on the Rea side, and heard its murmurings, rather than the bickerings of Church or State in higher places, apart from

> The loud misrule
> Of chaos far removed, lest fierce extremes
> Contiguous might distemper the whole frame.

In connection with the allowances made for Becket I think the passage following, from an early page of Dr. Hook's 'Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury,' very worthy of notice. There is plain good common sense in it, as well as the result of deep thought.

'Revolutions, in opinion or practice, are not inconsistent with identity of institution; and this identity is not renounced when in looking to the past we find much to regret or to

condemn. In looking back upon his past life and conduct, how bitter were the self-reproaches and how severe the self-condemnation of St. Paul! Yet Saul, the persecutor, and Paul, the apostle, are one and the self-same person. The removal of Naaman's leprosy did not destroy his personal identity—he was the same man after he had been washed in the water of the Jordan as he was before. And although the Church of England now repudiates many opinions which at one time she tolerated, and speaks with indignation of the dictation and oppression of a foreign potentate, to which she, during a long season, submitted, the sameness of her institutions is preserved in the succession of her prelates, and we admire the innate vigour which, inherited from her British and Anglo-Saxon ancestors, enabled her to avoid self-destruction while conducting the painful processes of a long course of reformation.'

'It must not be said of us,' said the old priest of Hanwood, who was well read in St. Jerome, '"*Eunomiani, Ariani, Macedoniani, nominibus separati, impietate concordes.*" We do not fall in with the innovations introduced by St. Augustine; we have submitted to much, but we are members of the old British Church; and it is pleasant to add that on the banks of the Rea, and throughout the whole valley, we have had numbers of holy men of God who have reached forth to the people the pine torch of the Gospel.'

What though unmarked the happy workmen toil.
And break, unthanked of men, the stubborn clod?
It is enough, for sacred is the soil,
Dear are the hills of God!

Far better in its place the lowliest bird
Should sing aright to Him the lowliest song,
Than that a seraph strayed should take the word,
And sing His glory wrong.

But although the time-honoured Old Oak held in great honour all the good priests of his time, he spoke very contemptuously of those who were not such, and of which sort, he said, in the course of long centuries, we have had plenty. And not only did he so speak of the lower orders of the clergy, but censured those in high places also when he thought

the boundaries of right were transgressed. It was in what he would have called quite modern times—such, to him, were the days of Henry II.—that he spoke tauntingly of a 'boy-bishop,' a mere youngling being nominated to so high a trust.

As far as I could make out from my Talking Friend, the scandal here alluded to took place in the days of Rosamund Clifford. In fact, an old acquaintance of the parson of Hanwood (the appellation shows a later date), one Alaric of Dudelibi (that is, Diddlebury—among the first grants made by Earl Roger de Montgomery and his countess, Adeliza, to the Abbey of Shrewsbury), than whom none knew better the history of Corfham and the Cliffords, told him that Geoffrey, Rosamund's second son, though at the time not twenty years of age, had been actually elected Bishop of Lincoln! No wonder the Old Oak was indignant.

One painfully calls to mind what is said of William of Corboil by Henry of Huntingdon. Take the account, good reader, as Dr. Hook gives it: 'The see of Canterbury was held by William, of whose merits nothing can be said, for he had none.' His name was a standing jest; he was called William de Turbine, or, as it is wittily translated by Archdeacon Churton, 'not William of Corboil, but William of Turmoil.' He might not be quite the man he is represented, and the kindly historian speaks a word of palliation; but as there were priests in those days who were under the mark, so, too, will there have been bishops. And the one and the other settled themselves as impudently and unconcernedly amongst their flocks as Hartwig, in his 'Sea and its Living Wonders,' tells us the fierasfer does in the *entera* of the sea cucumber. As there is a skeleton in every house, so every age has its incubus to bear. Bede's heavy censure in his letter to Ecgberht is well known, and Mr. Kemble remarks: 'It would be strange indeed if what has taken place in every other age and country should have been unexampled only among the Anglo-Saxons of the ninth and tenth centuries, or that their monks and clergy should have enjoyed a monopoly of purity, holiness, and devotion to duty.' Martial's line, I am afraid, will apply to British, Saxon, Norman, and more

modern times. We have only to change the neuter into the masculine gender :—

Sunt bona, sunt quædam mediocria, sunt mala plura.

Meanwhile, however, there was a great and visible progress in the state of the nation at large, and it was felt in the extremities of the land. And if amongst the teaching priests there were indifferent ones, on the whole, the life, the conversation, the example of the clergy at large was such as to improve and to teach the people around. It certainly was so on the banks of the Rea, and the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury always owed a debt to the successive abbots of Shrewsbury. As for the old priest to whom the time-honoured Oak was so much attached, he was one of all others devoted to holy thoughts, which he took care should end in practical conclusions, so benefiting his neighbours.

I have heard some say
Men are ne'er less alone than when alone,
Such power hath meditation.

With this good old man divine meditation and labour in the Lord were never separated, and the results were what the Old Oak declared. He was not a man to sit still when the people were in ignorance, and, as the prophet speaks, '*destroyed for lack of knowledge*.' For, as Jeremy Taylor so beautifully puts it in the 'History of the Life and Death of the Holy Jesus,' 'meditation is an attention and application of spirit to divine things, a searching out all instruments to a holy life, a devout consideration of them, and a production of those affections which are in a direct order to the love of God and a pious conversation. Indeed, meditation is all that great instrument of piety whereby it is made prudent, and reasonable, and orderly, and perpetual. For, supposing our memory instructed with the knowledge of such mysteries and revelations as are apt to entertain the spirit, the understanding is first and best employed in the consideration of them, and then the will in their reception, when they are duly prepared and so transmitted ; and both these in such manner, and to such purpose, that they become the magazine and great repositories of grace, and instrumental to all designs of virtue.'

Such was the tendency of all this good man's meditations, who never lived for himself, but for the people amongst whom he dwelt. Of him, and of those like to him, in the everyday manner of life and conversation, the poet could not have said—

> But first among the priests dissension springs,
> Men who attend the altar, and should most
> Endeavour peace; their strife pollution brings
> Upon the temple itself.

At the same time, when great darkness, great ignorance, and a vast indifference about holy things were to be found in every nook and corner of the land, some credit must be given to those who set themselves directly in opposition to the dominant evil, fighting, as best they might, the good fight of faith.

> Here was a happy war, fought without blows,
> Yet no dishonour in't; he that endures
> Such war within can be no coward sure.
> In all designs this still must be confessed,
> He that himself subdues conquers the best.

On one occasion—it was on the restoration of the old font in Hanwood Church to its proper place—I asked my Talking Friend if he had ever heard his time-honoured father speak of the interior of our early churches in the district. His reply was, that in days gone by they were very slenderly furnished in the country, and that in this district the font, the sacramental plate, and now and then an altar cloth for high days and holidays, comprehended all. The stoup and other paraphernalia belonged rather to Norman days than Saxon simplicity.

He added that there were some remarkable fonts in early days, and he quite well recollected to have heard that the old priest always called a font a '*vantston*'—that is to say, a fant, or font, of stone, showing the material out of which they were commonly made. Tredithic, the Old Oak's ancient friend, used to make mention of one he had seen in the territory of Clun, and at a time when fonts, or '*vantstones*,' were not so commonly met with. And I thought within myself that, not impossibly, it might be the old font of Bettwys y Crwn, 'an antiquity,' says Mr. Eyton, 'which written records

are far from reaching. This venerable symbol of the highest and purest faith survives for ages in a district where Christianity, nay, civilisation and humanity were unmeaning sounds.' The old priest himself had probably never travelled far, and trusted to hearsay. Travelling, indeed, in those times was no easy matter. As late as the days of Bishop Swinfield, in his progress in 1290, as we have seen before, he could not get from Church Stretton to Pontesbury without a guide, who cost him a penny—no such mean remuneration at that time, when the value of money was very different to what it is now.

On the subject of fonts, or vantstones, the curious reader is referred to Hearne's Preface to Leland's 'Collectanea,' and to the word 'vantston' in his Glossary to Robert of Gloucester's 'Chronicle.' In the Preface to the 'Collectanea' he gives a plate of that ancient one which stood for years at St. Peter's-in-the-East, Oxford, and in the Glossary an account of the one which stood in King Edward the Confessor's chapel at Islip. When he says that it sounded like a bell when struck, I called to mind a bell-metal font at Strangnäs, in Sweden, showing, as Mr. H. Marryat has observed, 'how water in these cold climes was heated beneath previous to immersion'—then more common than it is now.

The Icelandic scholar may read a curious passage in the 'Kristni Saga' of the early converts there refusing to be baptised in cold water—a difficulty which Thorgeir the Lagmann met by having them immersed in the hot-water baths of Langerdal and Reikdal, and so ended the matter.

As to the communion plate of early times there was little enough of that. They were not days of silver and of gold. These metals were introduced later, when, perhaps, the metal of the ministry was not so sound to the touch. The days were not yet when fine silver and gold were brought into country places from Guthrum's Lane—better known to modern years as Gutter Lane—where cunning artists worked at their trades in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Passing over what was so scurvily said by Boniface of wooden priests and golden vessels, the reader may turn to see what Dr. Stanley says of the 'rough sackcloth of the founder,'

and the 'wooden chalice' in the Troitska Monastery, compared with its after gorgeous magnificence.

The only plate my Talking Friend could tell me of as in early times belonging either to Hanwood or to Pontesbury were small cups with patens fitting on them, such as may even yet be found amongst the old memorials of old places, and belonging not unfrequently to extinct chapelries, such as Heene and Durrington, in Sussex. One may say of them now, in the words of the chronicler, '*These are ancient things.*'

It was noticed above that even in the country altar-cloths were every now and then to be found; and the old priest quite well remembered one which used to be brought forth with great pomp and ceremony at Pontesbury. As far as he recollected, it was never to be seen but at 'THE WAKES'—that is to say, on the vigil of the patron saint of the church, when there was a great fair, and all the people of the country met together, 'because there were fewer times of meeting than there are now in your days; and you say that "wakes" and "vigils" of this sort are better honoured in the breach than in the observance, as tending to immorality and wild uproar, which I (but recollect I am but an old oak after all) should have thought that the advance of the age and increased education and instruction generally would have put an end to.'

'In my early days,' the time-honoured Oak said to my Talking Friend, his son, 'the wakes were not the noisy meetings they were afterwards. In Saxon times we needed no grith-sergeant to keep the peace, though the Normans adopted a word from our own tongue. It was their tyrannical interference with our old sports that first brought in dissension, and turned the "wake" into a tumultuous assembly. They had no business to exact of us a *doveret*, as they called it; the name we never acknowledged—we only knew it to be an exaction, and such it was.'

Not knowing the allusion I turned, as I am wont to do, to the historians of Shrewsbury, where I read as follows: 'Before the institution of constables, which did not take place till 1253, it appears that the king used occasionally—perhaps

on the emergency of any sudden tumult or insurrection—to appoint sergeants to keep the peace. They were called *grith-sergeants*, from the Saxon ȝriƀ, peace, and had the power of exacting some payment called *doveret*. From this payment Henry III., by a charter dated at Westminster, Jan. 25, in the eleventh year of his reign, exempted all the lands of the Abbey of Shrewsbury.'

At the same time that my Talking Friend spoke of the grith-sergeant and the doveret, he referred to a very remarkable person who flourished in the times of the second Henry —a very learned Welshman of Mænor Pyrr, Mansio Pyrrhi, or Manorbeer—and the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury, living, as it were, on the skirts of Wales, were very proud of his fame. This great man's real name was Giraldus de Barri, known to us more commonly by the name of Cambrensis; but his detractors, or his enemies, called him Silvester, or the Savage—a very common name in those days, and retained still in the parish of Hanwood and other adjoining ones. It was a name, however, not to be too literally understood; for so a Norman would call a Saxon, much more a Cymry; so, too, the Greeks called all Orientals, and so the Chinese to this day call us.

Giraldus, no doubt, was a man of some eccentricities, and therefore the more acceptable to Innocent III. in his hours of ease; but say what may be said, and it must be confessed that he was one of the very first men of his day. Dr. Hook says of Archbishop Hubert that he was 'a bad linguist, and not a learned divine, but nevertheless one of the first statesmen of the age, and a man, the Pope was well aware, of a very independent spirit.' He it was that opposed the election of Giraldus Cambrensis, then Archdeacon, to the see of St. David's, who wished to make the Church in Wales an independent Church, and to have the Bishop of St. David's recognised as the Primate of Wales.

There can be no doubt whatever that his name was a favourite one amongst the Welsh and in the border counties. It certainly was so in Shropshire, and my Talking Friend would say over and over again that 'Wales in those days was not overstocked with great and learned men, and that those

who were in opposition never dealt fairly by him. He was an honour to his country.'

Although in his works he does not spare the ignorance of the Welsh, yet in his peculiarities, his eccentricities, his strange stories and narratives (so curiously inserted in his books) I think I can see the Welshman peep out constantly. The racy cleverness of the educated Cymry is unmistakable. The 'Gemma Ecclesiastica,' now first published by Mr. Brewer, is a most remarkable treatise ; and the notes of that very able editor upon the summary of its contents tend so much to exemplify what is the purpose of this chapter that I shall transcribe them at length, in hopes that the reader may turn to the book itself.

'Such,' he says, 'is the summary of the chief contents of this remarkable book, which sets before the reader a more distinct picture of the manners of the times and the actual condition of morality and religion in the less civilised districts of England and Wales than can be found elsewhere. There is much that is grotesque in it, much that is trivial, much that is likely to offend the more civilised tastes of this age, accustomed to the long discipline of thought and the more artificial arrangement and selection of topics, which the very dialectical studies condemned by Giraldus tended more than any other discipline to produce. But the inquirer who is really anxious to catch the form and the spirit of that age will find in the very artlessness of the book no small recommendation as shadowing forth with more fidelity and probability the mental condition of the times it represents, the strange admixture, the startling mosaic, of classics, fathers, and canonists, the grossest superstition existing side by side with the purest and most ennobling truths of Christianity, a perfect idea of Christian polity and economy mocked by the startled and distorted representation of them in the daily life of man ; falsehood and truth, light and darkness, the leaven and the unleaven, jumbled together in the strangest disorder —all these are striking characteristics of an age which had grown up under many masters, and had received an inheritance from every quarter of gold, silver, wood, and stone, without judgment enough to sever the one from the other ;

and now, standing on the verge of a new era, was doomed to pass under the strictest training and discipline to which the intellect of Europe had ever been submitted. If in the course of this transition from confusion to order, moral as well as intellectual, the forms of error appear more gaunt, startling, and grotesque than even error itself when it rode triumphant in undisputed grandeur over the ancient world, the result is no more than a thoughtful reader would have expected. The phantoms of dead and dying falsehoods seem more gigantic and more troublesome to the imagination of men than the falsehoods themselves, and no shapes are more appalling than those of the twilight. How the great nations of Europe passed from Paganism to Christianity; how much of the old unfermented mass still remained after their conversion; how slow and hard the process for men living at every pore, and feeling in all their limbs the diversity of nature, to pass into the spiritual life unfolded by Christianity; how violent the efforts followed by reaction as violent; how restless the craving for assurance to the sense of that which is above the senses —these, and many more, constitute the integers of that great problem which has yet to be told in its fulness. And for that purpose so faithful a transcript of the age as the "Gemma Ecclesiastica" of Giraldus, now for the first time placed before the reader, will prove no unwelcome aid.'

It occasionally struck me as remarkable that my Talking Friend never, or at least very rarely, spoke of the several forest charters, nor yet of Magna Charta, that great palladium of English liberty signed at Runnymede, near Windsor, June 15, 1215, by that most unprincipled and reckless monarch, King John. The truth is the genial old tree, pleasant company always, seemed to look to the progress of society in the gross, and it was a cheerful thing and a comforting to hear him speak of each successive age as an improving one. Even the mischievous boys that broke his boughs, and stoned him for his acorns, and drove stub-nails into his gnarled and knotty trunk he looked upon with every possible allowance. He was not one to complain *elegiacally*, like the Nux in Ovid, but concluded well and wisely that when their wild heydays were over they would start forth

from the banks of the Rea, if needed, to defend the land. Nor was he mistaken, for whenever men were wanted Shropshire could furnish them. Some old Shrewsbury boy may like to read the lines in the NUX without having to turn for them. Fear never shook the Old Oak's leaves; it was only the wind from Habberley Hole—the Æolus cave of this part of the country, and the nurse of storms.

Sæpe meas vento frondes tremuisse putastis :
Sed metus in nobis causa tremoris erat.
Si merui, videorque nocens ; imponite flammæ,
Nostraque fumosis urite membra focis.
Si merui, videorque nocens ; excidite ferro :
Et liceat miseræ dedecus esse semel.
Si nec cur urar, nec cur excidar, habetis ;
Parcite : sic cœptum perficiatis iter.

One point I must not omit to mention before this chapter is brought to a conclusion, and that is the favour with which my Talking Friend always looked upon the establishments of the Franciscan, Austin, and Dominican Friars in Shrewsbury. Very different, clearly, were the views of the old priest of Hanwood from those of Milton when he coupled together—

Embryos and idiots, eremites and friars,
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.

It is the more curious that the old priest of Hanwood in those days should have stood up for these houses, as, of course, they were one and all established in opposition to the monasteries and abbeys; and certainly the many priests at Hanwood and Pontesbury took great interest both in Wenlock and Shrewsbury Abbeys, and had their friends and supporters amongst their inmates. Nevertheless my Talking Friend said that it was as he reported, and he always maintained that the several houses in Shrewsbury were 'houses of mercy,' and he would add, 'In those hard times lucky the poor wanderer that found one!'

And I bethought me how I had visited all these ruins in my childhood, and what hold their history had taken of me, and how I regretted in later years that Southey never had time to complete the history of the Orders, for which in England and in Portugal he had made such large collections.

Fifty years ago and more I was taken by a kindly man, long since dead and gone, to visit what remained of the Franciscans (a name which owed its origin to John of Assisi's knowledge of French (Francesco), which was evidently not common amongst his fellows), and, as I remember, it was on the banks of the Severn, under the Wyle Cop. Little of it enough remains, and that little was of a more recent date; as the historians of Shrewsbury report, in the words of my kind old friend Archdeacon Owen, in his early publication, 'a window, with an arch obtusely pointed, marks it to have been the work of Friar Francis, who, according to Leland, had in the early part of Henry VIII.'s reign re-edified the greater portion of the house.' It was impressed upon me that they were called the Grey Friars from their loose gown of grey serge, and that they called themselves Friars Minor in token of lowliness and humility. The historians of Shrewsbury have given a plate of the ruin, converted into dwelling houses. I have never seen it since I was a boy, and must once more look it up again. It appears to have been founded early in the thirteenth century.

The Austin Friars, or Friars Eremites of St. Austin—who probably take their name from the great St. Austin of Hippo, though they owe their foundation to Alexander IV.—are still a constant haunt of mine when I visit the good old town, for there lives Sarah Harley, who is always ready to receive me, and was almost my playmate: a lady to whom the parish in which she lives and the schools in which she takes so deep an interest are deeply indebted. The ancient name of her home will be found in Shirley's 'Noble and Gentle Men of England.' Her father was Samuel Harley, some time Mayor of Shrewsbury, and at the head of the trade of the town, who first took me to see Archdeacon Owen, who knew how to value such a man. They are sure to meet hereafter in the GREAT GUILD above, where no changes are known and the redeemed rejoice everlastingly.

> By disobedience we did knowledge get,
> And sorrow ever since hath followed it.

So said Wither in his 'Shepherd's Hunting.' No such dis-

obedience was theirs ; they were humble men who did their duty to God and their neighbour, and were a blessing to the old town in which they lived, and all men blessed them.

But to return to the Austin Friars, established, it is said, in Shrewsbury, but not without controversy, in the time of Henry III., about the year 1255. On their original name in these parts, Fratres de Coulon, or Friars of Coulon (*Brethren* of Coulon, I think, would be a mistake), the reader must consult the historians of Shrewsbury, whose guess is, to say the least, ingenious.

Meanwhile to anyone that crosses the Welsh Bridge, and goes straight forward, the position of the Austin Friars, at the bottom of the Barker Street, is not easily mistaken. Before ascending Claremont Hill he has but to turn to the right from Romaldsham, as it was anciently called, and he comes upon all that remains of the friary—a mere shell of a building, of red stone, with two pointed doorways. The upper part seems to have had a range of windows, but the lower portion only remains. Probably this was the refectory. When I saw it last it was filled with carpenters' material, and round about it was hewn stonework ; and there was a very aged man standing by, rapt in the contemplation of the past.

In extremo abdita
Iners senectus adjuvat baculo gradum !

I may add in conclusion, from the historians of Shrewsbury : ' It had formerly been used as a place of burial when the kingdom lay under an interdict in the reign of King John, at which time the dead were not permitted to repose in consecrated ground and to be attended to the grave with the offices of religion. There being now no appearance that this spot would be again wanted for that purpose, the *Friars of Coulon* thought it would be a good place for the site of their chapel. They obtained a writ directed to the sheriff, commanding him to inquire whose property it was ; and the result of that inquiry fixing it in the crown, the king—Feb. 16, 39 Henry III. (1254-5)—ordered the sheriff to give them the seisin of it in his name.' The Augustine Monks and the Austin Friars are often confounded, as the reader may see for himself on referring to Hook's ' Church Dictionary.'

The other house in Shrewsbury (for the Carmelites, or White Friars, had never any settlement here) was that of the Black, or Preaching Friars, so called from their dress and their office, and Dominicans from their founder, Dominic de Gusman, a Spaniard. All old Shrewsbury boys know the place of their abode, by tradition at least, for it extended from the Water Lane to the English bridge; and they could tell the stranger how clever they were in laying pipes under the river and conveying water for their use from Flegwell Spring, near Monkmoor. But when the stranger asked to see the ruins the reply invariably, sufficiently scholastic, was only this :—

Ipsæ periere ruinæ.

Since 1803 the very ruins have disappeared; their place knows them no more!

'These Black Friars,' say the historians of Shrewsbury, 'are said to have first come to England in 1221. They were not, like the monks—who rose up in a far ruder state of society—dispersed over the country, but settled almost exclusively in towns, which afforded a more copious harvest for their labours; and Shrewsbury must have been one of the first to which they came, for on June 4, in the sixth year of Henry III. (1222), that young king, who became at a subsequent period of his reign a great protector of all the mendicant orders, by writ issued at Worcester commands the sheriff of Shropshire to let the Preaching Friars have his (the king's) stone which lies in Severn, under the *ballium* of the castle, for the building of their church: *ad fabricam ecclesie sue de dono regis.*'

I append to what is above said the extracts following from Leland's 'Itinerary,' which the curious reader and the antiquary will find commented upon by the historians above referred to, and materially corrected.

'The *Grey Fryers* of *Shrewsbury* of the *Charleton's* Foundation, and ther laye the Lady *Charleton*, whome they tooke as their foundresse. And this house stood upon Severne banke, a little above the bridge of 5 arches.' To this must be added a passage which occurs in a later volume: 'My Lorde *Powis* sayeth that *Hawise*, wife to *Charleton*, lorde of

Powis, was the causer that the Gray Freres College in *Shrobbesbyri*, wher she lyith buried under a state marble by *Charleton's* tombe, was builded. And that she caused *Charleton* to be builded.'

'One *D. Francis*, a Frere of late dayes, re-edified almost a great part of the Fryers' house. The house of the Blacke Fryers was of the Lady *Geneville's* foundation, and this stood a little without the well upon *Severne's* syde, at the end of *Marwell* Street'—probably St. Mary's Well.

'The *Augustine Fryers* were the foundation of the *Staffordes*. It stood a little beneath *Welsh* Bridge. Many gentlemen killed at *Battlefeild* buried here, and at the *Blacke Fryers*.'

My Talking Friend so often spoke of the friars of Shrewsbury and their houses that I thought it right to mention them, the more so as all their localities brought back pleasant reminiscences of my childhood, and of those schoolboy days which all who were educated under dear old Bishop Butler love to dwell upon. Not a few of us took a great interest in the dear old town, of the friary houses of which Churchyard speaks 'of the ground called the Welsh Fryers,' by which he meant the Austin Friars; and I now turn to his lines with sensible satisfaction:—

> What new things now, with franknesse well begun,
> Can staine those deedes our fathers old have done?
> Great towyns they built, great churches reard likewise,
> Which makes our fame to fall and theirs to rise.
>
> Look on the works and wits of former age,
> And our tyme shall come dragging far behind;
> If both tymes might be plainly playd on stage,
> And old tyme past be truely called to mind,
> For all our brave, fine, glorious buyldings gay,
> Tyme past would run with all the fame away.
> Aske Oxforde that, and Cambridge if it please,
> In this one poynt shall you resolve at ease.

The only friar I ever heard mentioned by my Talking Friend was one of the Dominicans, whom he called Ernest de Acco—which, of course, means Acre. He was a personal friend of the priest of Hanwood who lived in those days, and never apparently interfered with his parish. Indeed, as my

Talking Friend said, 'there was no cause for so doing, for, where sickness was, or trouble, there the good man was to be found; and he could not say he did not preach the Gospel, for he did so from year's end to year's end, and his life was evangelical;' or, as he would sometimes put it very simply, 'he lived sermons as well as preached them.'

For many successive springs, or, at all events, before Palm Sunday, he used to come from Shrewsbury to Cruck Meole and Hanwood to gather box and yew, which were used to dress the chapel and the refectory, as both, within my recollection, have been used at Easter, when the 'gullies,' or the 'willow blossom,' could not be found. If the reader will turn to Sir Henry Ellis' Notes to Palm Sunday in Brand's 'Popular Antiquities' he will find that the box and the yew were frequently confounded. Indeed, in the '*Benedictio Florum et Frondium*' a large margin was given in the words '*Benedic* ✠ *etiam et hos ramos palmarum cæterarumque arborum*,' &c. &c.

'A little box was left after the palm dressing of St. Michael's in Shrewsbury,' said the priest of Hanwood one day to my Talking Friend, 'and the priest then good-naturedly made it over to me, little thinking that others came to us for box, and that the grand old yew, which now stands in Hanwood Churchyard, stood there then, and that it was used by the country round.'

And I recollected that herewith was connected a curious bit of history, showing indeed the liberality of the priest of St. Michael's — who probably did not know, though St. Michael's claimed tithes in Cruck Meole—that box and yew were to be procured so near at hand on the banks of the Rea. Let me refer the reader to Mr. Eyton and to Archdeacon Owen. The former says:—

'Under the heading *Quod tenet* (*ecclesia*) *Sancti Michaelis* "Domesday" says: "The Church of St. Michael holds Possatorne of the Earl. Chatel held it (in Saxon times). Here is one virgate of land. The (arable) land (is enough for) half an ox team. One tenant tenders for the same a bundle of box on Palm Sunday."' On which let Archdeacon Owen's words serve as a comment: 'At the time of the general

survey this chapel, or church, as it is there called, held a virgate and half a carucate of land in Possatorne, and a carucate in Suletune, or Soulton, near Wem; in all about 200 acres. The former of these places, an obscure hamlet at the foot of the Brown Clee, paid as part of its rent a bundle of box, a tenure which has escaped the researches of Blunt and his editor. This was intended as a substitute for palm branches on the Sunday before Easter—still called Palm Sunday in memory of the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, when branches of palm trees were strewed in His way.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

CYMRY AND COAL.

Melt at my tears, and be compassionate,
Soft pity enters at an iron gate.

SHAKSPEARE, *Rape of Lucrece.*

This was the dungeon, deep and dark,
Where the starved prisoner mourned in vain
Until death left him, stiff and stark,
Unconscious of the galling chain
By which the thin bleached bones were bound,
When chance revealed them under ground.

The Lady of La Garaye.

Let all that belong to great men remember th' old wives' tradition, to be like the lions i' th' Tower on Candlemas Day ; to mourn if the sun shine, for fear of the pitiful remainder of the winter to come.—WEBSTER'S *Vittoria Corombona*, i. 163, ed. Dyce.

Nessun maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.

DANTE, *Inferno*, v. 121.

IT is with local history, rather than with the general history of England, that the reminiscences of both the old oaks are concerned. For instance, though the crusades stirred the soul of the whole country from the Lizard to John o' Groats yet it is little that my Talking Friend ever said about them. The chief, indeed, of his allusions to these remarkable movements is to be found in a story or two which have been recorded in the earlier pages of these volumes. I do not know that I agree with what Mr. Hallam says in his 'Literature of Europe,' 'that the intercourse between Greece and the west of Europe, occasioned by commerce and the crusades, had little or no influence upon literature'—indeed, I should not agree with his statement at all were it not presently followed by what he calls 'the proper period of the restoration of Greek learning'; for certainly, for evil and for good,

and, in their results, for the spread of learning generally, they did much. I could never be brought to think—notwithstanding the evils of war and the destruction of life—that that badge of the crusaders' devotion, 'the cross of red cloth on their right shoulder,' was for nothing; albeit, as the same racy writer says, 'it is labour in vain for any to endeavour to re-establish a kingdom in a blasted country; and let none ever look to reap any harvest who sow that land which God will have to lie fallow.' The reader may be pleased to read Wordsworth's sonnet, which speaks feelingly and fairly.

Nor can imagination quit the shores
Of those bright scenes without a farewell glance
Given to the dream-like issues, the romance
Of many-coloured life that fortune pours
Round the crusaders, till on distant shores
Their labours end, or they return to lie,
The vow performed, in cross-legged effigy,
Devoutly stretched upon their chancel floors.
Am I deceived? or is their requiem chanted
By voices never mute when heaven unties
Her inmost, softest, tenderest harmonies;
Requiem which earth takes up with voice undaunted,
When she would tell how brave, and good, and wise,
For their high guerdon not in vain have panted?

But, as I said, this great movement was not one which greatly concerned either of the old oaks. The reeds and the water-lilies of the Rea were more familiar to them than the palms and the oleanders of the Jordan.

In these days King John died, regretted by none, or, like Nero, by very few. Unhappily Henry of Winchester, his son—so called from the place of his birth—was but a child of eight years old. Happily, however, in the Earl of Pembroke, the protector, he had a wise and a good adviser, though the land had many troubles. Poor royal youth! he might have said what Churchyard writes in Morton's 'Tragedie':—

The restless race that mortal men do runne
Seemes smoothe to sight, yet full of scratting breers;
There is no reste nor surety under sunne,
Soure is the taste of flowres that swate appeare;
Our gentle joyes are in our tender yeares;
For, as the childe to witte and reason growes,
So judgment comes, and seedes of sorrow sowes.

It was just before the death of John that the Old Oak heard of the advance of Llewelyn upon Shrewsbury, to whom John had given his natural daughter, Joanna, in marriage, and had settled on him the manor of Ellesmere. But neither the marriage tie nor the lordship of Ellesmere could keep him back (naturally, the Old Oak seemed to think) from the great desire of his heart—the independence of the Cymry, and with this the recovery of Shrewsbury, or Pengwerne, the old seat of the princes of Powis. The barbarities which resulted on both sides, but especially on the side of John, have been alluded to before. Llewelyn, however, though he did not hold it for more than a year at that time, reinstated himself in the inheritance of his fathers four hundred and fifty years after it had been wrested from them. 'Many changes,' said the time-honoured Oak, 'have I seen in my time; but the joy of the Cymry, as they passed and repassed at this time, I never knew surpassed. They always have been a people whose nationality was of the strongest.'

The period here alluded to is thus noticed by the historians of Shrewsbury:—'The entrance of Llewelin'—the Lyolin, or Leoline, of old Stowe—'into the ancient metropolis of Powis must have been a moment of triumphant gratulation. That spirited prince was not ignorant of the ancient glories of his line, nor devoid of vigour and activity to assert and reclaim his lost rights. A period of four centuries and a half had elapsed since Pengwerne had been wrested from the hands of his progenitors, and we may well conceive the pride and satisfaction with which he surveyed the lofty spires and embattled turrets of his recent conquest; while every bard of his household would new string his harp, and in his native verse proclaim that now was the period arrived when the descendant of Cadwallader would avenge the robberies of the Saxon spoiler upon the feeble princes of the house of Plantagenet. This is not mere imagination. The bard of Llewelin the Great intimates that his hero grasped in imagination the sceptre of England. "He is for recovering the government of all Britain;" "He puts Lloegr (England) to flight, and is fully bent to conquer the land that was formerly in the possession of Cadwallon, the son of Cadfan."

Cadwallon was the father of Cadwallader, the last king of the Britons.'

Amongst other things the Old Oak would talk of was the grant of Ruckley and Condover to Joanna, the wife of Llewelyn. The priest of Hanwood had friends in both places, and it was a general subject of conversation when Henry III. granted the new charter of 1226 to the burgesses of Shrewsbury. Some have ranged 'the Merchant Guild' under this date; but guilds of this sort dated back to the times of Henry II., and there is documentary evidence of their existence in Shrewsbury as early as the eleventh year of John. I mention this circumstance because the priest of Hanwood that was in those days took great interest in all guilds, and wished to establish them, in a small way, in all surrounding parishes, which had he done, he might have been considered the founder of all modern clubs.

Connected with this reign and time, the time-honoured Oak recollected well the contest about the wood of Montgomery, and had heard tell of Hubert de Burgh's castle—called Hubert's Folly; indeed, it was no uncommon subject of talk among the Cymry on their way to Shrewsbury. It was from one of these wayfarers that he shuddered to hear of Joanna's faithlessness, and of the hanging of William de Braose, the guilty adulterer, one of whose daughters, Isabel, had married Llewelyn's son David—that David who leagued himself with Henry against his brother Gryffyth, in the Old Oak's eyes a most dishonourable transaction. Nothing, he would add, could be more miserable than the state of the border from what he called 'the war of Richard Merescall' till the death of Llewelyn, Gryffyth, and David; for the country round about was grievously ravaged and pitted by both parties, and the cruelties on both sides were as like as one acorn is to another. And as he shook his aged boughs he said pleasantly, 'The time could not take the polish off my acorns.' Llewelyn, who died April 11, 1240, he always considered a great hero; but his great sympathy was with Gryffyth, who broke his neck in endeavouring to escape from his prison house in the Tower, March 1, 1244. He was not one to whom it might have been said—

Discord to malcontents is very manna.

On the contrary, he loved his country thoroughly, and was a very Welshman to the backbone. Old Stow, quoting Matthew Paris as his authority, thus reports his death: 'Griffin, the eldest son of Leoline, prince of North Wales, which was kept prisoner in the Tower of London, devised subtilly how to escape; wherefore, one night, having deceived the watch, he made of the hangings, sheetes, towels, &c. a long line, and put himself down from the top of the Tower. But, as he was sliding a good pace, with the weight of his body—being a very big man and a fat—the rope brake, and he felle on his necke; whose miserable carcasse in the morning being found by the Tower wall was a pitiful sight to the beholders, for his head and necke were driven into his breast betweene the shoulders. The king hearing hereof punished the watchmen, and caused Griffin's son, that was imprisoned with his father, to be more streightly kept.'

It was upon the death of Gryffyth that Henry conferred on his eldest son, afterwards Edward I.—at that time only four years old—the title of PRINCE OF WALES. The Llewelyn we hear of next in history is the son of Gryffyth, and it was his brother Owen who was in the Tower prison when his father came to his melancholy end. His name appears constantly throughout the reign of Henry, and in 1267 it was conceded to him that he should receive the homage of the Welsh nobles and bear that very title which, as we have just seen, Henry had conferred on his own infant son.

It was in one of the raids in these Welsh wars that William le Brun, the parson of Montgomery, exclaimed, as he urged on his Welshmen, 'Stay there for the honour of the Cymry, and let us recover Pengwerne and the land of Powis! Would not our predecessor, De Boulers, have stood to the rescue, though the advowson of Montgomery was Henry's?' And he dashed into the thickest of the fray with the foremost.

And we may think it strange, but there was no strangeness in it at all. Indeed, up to this time we need not wonder to read of an 'iron surcoat' belonging to a bishop, like to that which is mentioned among the damages done to Bishop's

Castle by John Fitz-Alan (II.), lord of Arundel. It needed not, in early days, to go to Denmark and to seek for an '*Absalom, som Helt, Statsman, og Biskop*'; we had warrior-statesman-bishops of our own, though they were excepted from personal service in the field on payment of their *here-geat*, or, as we now call it, with a difference of signification, *heriot*. No doubt Mr. Kemble is right when he states, 'Though it is probable that the bishop's geréfa was found to lead his contingent under the command of the ealdorman, yet we have ample evidence that the prelates themselves did not hold their station to excuse them from taking part in the just and lawful defence of their country and religion against strange and pagan invaders. Too many fell in conflict to allow of our attributing their presence on the field merely to their anxiety lest the belligerents should be without the due consolations of religion; and in other cases, upon the alarm of hostile incursions, we find the levies stated to have been led against the enemy by the duke and bishop of the district.' It is added in a note that 'as late as 43 Edward III., A.D. 1369, on an alarm of invasion orders were given to arm and array the clergy as well as the laity.' So that when one of the abbots of Shrewsbury said to the priest of Hanwood that a certain bishop of Hereford was as proud as a Knight Templar who rode double, the sarcasm was intended to cut both ways, alluding to regal pomp under the guise of hood and lowly gown.

We may refer again to old Stow for the explanation, who, under the year A.D. 1241, tells it thus: 'The Templars in London at this time, in great glory, entertained the nobility, forraine embassadors, and the prince himself very often, insomuch that Matthew Paris cryeth out on them for their pride, who, being at the first so poor as that they had but one house to serve two of them (in token whereof they gave in their seales two men upon one horse-backe), yet sodainly they waxed so insolent that they disdained other orders, and sorted themselves with noblemen.' As is well known, the pride of the Templars continued to increase, and Temple Baldall, in the forest of Arden, given to them by Roger de Mowbray—whence its name, for it is not mentioned in

'Domesday'—was a name not unfrequently repeated under the shade of the time-honoured Oak.

It has been mentioned before that what did not immediately relate to his own vicinity was little noticed by the Old Oak on the Rea side. A great stayer at home (as was natural from the depth of his roots), he had but a homely wit. Hence it came about that he knew little, comparatively, of the great events of this long reign. The maddest of parliaments might to him have been the sanest but for what he heard beneath his hospitable shade, whether from the priest of Hanwood or from others. Something of Simon de Montfort he would be sure to hear, and when, as Earl of Leicester, he rebelled against his sovereign, that was more than his heart of oak could well put up with, and he thought the old town of Shrewsbury had been tainted by his presence. But when they told him that on June 11, 1258, he had put himself at the head of his rebellious barons at Oxford, and forced young Edward, then but eighteen, to sign that baronial treaty, his old boughs and leaves quivered with excitement, and my Talking Friend said that from that day forth the wrinkles on his gnarled trunk were visibly deeper. How he stood the captivity of father and son after the battle of Lewes, May 14, 1264, it is not easy to say; but his rejoicing was unmistakable when he heard of the victory at Evesham on May 4, 1265, and the death of De Montfort and his son Henry; and he said, 'The English character was not one to bear the *aristocracy* of the turbulent barons and the tyranny of the Earl of Leicester. He could as soon put up with the boastings of a poplar tree or the arrogance of a plane tree or a willow!'

As is very well known, two opinions are held of De Montfort's character, and some think he sided only with liberty. Whether or not, the time-honoured Old Oak was sure he was a traitor to his salt, and so disliked his name thoroughly. Certainly, in more reigns than one, there has been a large class of whom it might be said—

> And now to fulness grown, boldly give out
> That they the public wrongs mean to redress;
> Formless themselves, reforming do pretend,
> As if confusion could disorder mend.

The satisfactory point was that 'the royal authority was now re-established. The rest of the country submitted to it. The good sense of Edward concurred with the experience of past evils to infuse a wiser and more popular spirit into the conduct of government; and its prudence was rewarded by the internal tranquillity which it produced.' So writes Turner, who takes a favourable view even of the weaknesses of Henry III., 'who had to endure the reproaches of a warring world for his peaceable temper.' Hume's sentence has a pithy turn: 'On the whole, we may say that greater ability with his good dispositions would have prevented him from falling into his faults, or with bad dispositions would have enabled him to maintain and defend them.'

Under any circumstances, things were not under Henry as they were under the reckless John, when the pope had the pre-eminence, as the ellganga, or magician, has amongst the negroes of Central Africa. For it was in this reign that Robert Grossetête, as Stow writes again in his 'Chronicle,' 'Bishop of Lincolne, in Greeke, Latine, and other languages, did, by an epistle, reprove Pope Innocent, affirming that the Preaching Fryers and Minorite Fryers were infected with heresies. This Robert Gorsted deceased at his manor of Bugedenam' (the modern Buckden). 'He was an Englishman, born in Suffolke, whose learning (in Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, and other languages), joyned with vertue and good life, won to him perpetual commendation. He was a manifest blamer of the pope and king, a reprover of prelates, a correcter of monkes, a director of priests, an instructor of clerks, a sustainer of schollers, a preacher to the people, a persecutor of unchaste livers, a diligent searcher of the Scriptures, a mallet to rack strangers as sought preferment in the realm by the pope's provisions. In housekeeping liberal, in corporal refection plentiful, and in ministering spiritual food devout and godly affected; in his bishop's office diligent, reverend, and never wearied. He gave his books to the Fryers Minors in Oxford.' No wonder that the fame of such a man had reached the banks of the Rea. Through the abbot of Shrewsbury the priest of Hanwood had heard of him, as well as of his great junior, the celebrated Friar Bacon, himself a

Franciscan, or a Minorite, also. Grossetête was almost forty years his senior, but the number of the years of both was the same, each dying at the age of seventy-eight.

Very different, however, was the report which, to a much later date, the priest of Hanwood heard of Friar Bacon, for even the abbot of Shrewsbury spoke of him as a conjurer and a magician. 'Oh, what a sin it is,' says old Fuller, 'to be more trained than one's neighbours in a barbarous age!' Nor was it only Ralph Simnell, the king's fool, who could report of him as 'a brave necromancer that can make women of devils, and can juggle cats into costermongers'; but learned doctors of the day maintained that he dealt in the black art. Hence Greene makes Burden say—

> Bacon, we hear, that long we have suspect,
> That thou art read in magic's mystery:
> In pyromancy to divine by flames,
> To tell by hydromantie ebbs and tides,
> By aeromancy to discover doubts,
> To plain out questions as Apollo did.

And again, within a few lines, in allusion to that head of marvellous repute and power:—

> I tell thee, Bacon, Oxford makes report,
> Nay, England and the court of Henry says
> Thou'rt making of a brazen head by art,
> Which shall unfold strange doubts and aphorisms,
> And read a lecture in philosophy;
> And, by the help of devils and ghastly fiends,
> Thou mean'st, ere many years or days be past,
> To compass England with a wall of brass.

It was many many years after Henry's days that England found out that this learned friar in his cell 'was the undoubted, but unowned, original whence his great namesake drew the materials of his famous experimental system.' The venerable abbot of Shrewsbury had no such farsightedness into Friar Bacon's character, neither had the good priest of Hanwood, when he returned home, after a long conversation in the abbey parlour, over St. George's Bridge and through St. George's Gate—for so the Welsh bridge and gate were called in Henry II. and Henry III.'s days, because St. George's Hospital, in Frankwell, was close to it. 'It was for this

reason designated in the town seal by a shield bearing the cross of that saint.' And so it is that truth is the child of time, which brings all hidden things to light,

Maugre the Momists and Satiric seats.

It was upon one of these visits to the well-known parlour at the abbey that his friend the abbot had told the priest of Hanwood of a great conflict which had just taken place between the scholars and the townsmen in Oxford—so early did such contests begin, so long have they continued! As Ovid said—

Scilicet ingeniis aliqua est concordia junctis
Et servat studii fœdera quisque sui.
Rusticus agricolam, miles fera bella gerentem,
Rectorem dubiæ navita puppis amat.

The abbot of those days was Thomas—who succeeded Henry of Evesham—an ecclesiastic of great repute with Henry, and his ambassador to Alphonso, King of Castile, whose niece, Eleanor, became Edward I.'s wife, so well known to us all from the Cross at Waltham. The above-named Thomas had a great regard for the priest of Hanwood, who supplied the refectory with many a dish of trouts and many a wild duck, the wild ducks of the Rea being as celebrated then as they have continued to be. They are, in fact, half as large again as common decoy ducks, and are rarely fishy. The history of this conflict occupied much of the abbot's attention at this moment, for his sister's son, Henry de Berrington, was not only present at it, but a party concerned, and now lay sick at Berrington from a wound on the head he had received in it.

It was stated just now that the priest of Hanwood brought an offering of trouts to his friend the abbot of Shrewsbury. With the Severn close by, this, to general readers, might appear odd; but it is not so. For, besides that no stream produced better trout than the Rea—which flowed by the old water locality—fish were an acceptable offering always, and never appear to have been too common.

What is still more remarkable, with the Severn washing its doors, is this, that when the Court was at Shrewsbury

fish was brought for its use from the stews of Newport, or, as it was clerkly expressed in those days, *de Novo Burgo*. Indeed, the *vivarium* of Newport was notorious. 'One of the services of the burgesses was to convey the fish taken in this vivary to the king's Court. This custom continued as a right due to the Audleys. Hence, between the years 1247 and 1253, we have the following curious release: 'James, son of Henry de Audley, quit claims to the burgesses of New Borough the following, viz. that they shall not carry the fish of the vivary of New Borough any whither except within the boundaries of Shropshire.' For this release the burgesses paid 5*l*. 'The arms of the town of Newport (three fishes in pale) are allusive to the famous vivary which adjoined the town,' and to the service just alluded to. And in a subsequent page we have as follows: 'A record of June 1211 says that "Alexander de Novo Burgo ought of his service to keep the king's vivary of Novus Burgus;" and in another place that Alexander Fisher (Piscator), of Novus Burgus, holds five burgages in Salop with two *cultures*, all involved in his service, viz. that he must keep the king's vivary. Alexander le Peschur, whom we have seen to have been living in 1228, was probably the person in question.' I may note in passing that when I was a boy there was an old family of the 'Fishers' still resident in Newport, and there probably is now. A stranger might fancy that he saw the remnant of the old vivary at Aqualate.

As connected with this period, and before I pass on to another chapter, I may relate how the time-honoured Old Oak frequently spoke of a mineral fuel, now so common in the valley of the Rea under the name of COAL. My Talking Friend told me that his venerable father used to speak of it as a great curiosity. He had, however, been informed that the Romans used it in this island, and that cinders had been found in many places. The first piece he himself ever saw was brought to Cruck Meole by one Ivvan Ivvans—which in modern orthography is perhaps Evan Evans—who came from the neighbourhood of Pentrebychan, near Wrexham, where he said that people picked it up on the surface of the ground and used it for lights and kindlers. He brought it as

a curiosity to show to his old chum Hugh ap Rice—or, as we now write it, Price—who lived by the ford close by. 'Little did my aged father think,' said my Talking Friend, 'that in my time the whole valley would be indebted to this mineral for its fuel, and that our lead and iron would be all smelted by its heat.' To which he added, 'I have seen a piece burn like a candle, and I have been told that the Welsh called it *canwyll*; but I do not recollect my father saying that Ivvan Ivvans called it so.' No doubt he did not, for the *kennel*, or *cand*-coal, as it is yet called, was of a much later date; but, like the Irish bog-oak and Scotch pine, it has been often used in the place of a torch or candle, like as the Indians of Columbia and Vancouver use the houlalean, or torch-fish.

And so, as usual, I fell a-thinking, and as trial by ordeal was done away with in this reign it is clear that to 'call over the coals' could not refer to *pit-* or *sea-* but to *char*-coal. Coal, however, began to be dug more commonly in the north, and Henry III. gave the inhabitants of Newcastle a licence to dig it, and the proverb 'to carry coals to Newcastle' is old, and has a wrinkle in it. Hence, no doubt, Bishop Fleetwood is correct in stating in his 'Chronicon Pretiorum,' 'Whenever you meet with coals in old accounts you are to understand thereby *char-coal*, not *sea-coal*, which has not been in common use (as well as I can guess) 150 years—at least, not in London, though I find them in Matthew Paris under the name of *carbo marinus* in the time of Henry III.'

But was not pitcoal used by the Romans and the Anglo-Saxons?

From recent as well as early discoveries it is quite clear the Romans used it, as Mr. Wright observes in his 'Essays on Archæology': 'It has been fully ascertained that the Romans *in* this island used mineral coal. Extensive remains of their coal operations have been found in Northumberland and, I believe, in North Wales, where the seams cropped out at the surface; and the cinders of mineral coal have been met with in more than one instance in the fireplaces of Roman villas.' They have been found, indeed, in this valley and, as I am told, at Shelve. Still more recently, burnt and unburnt coal has been found in the hypocausts at Uriconium, or Wroxeter, as the reader may satisfy himself by visiting the

museum at Shrewsbury. Whether the *gagates lapis* of Bell is coal I dare not affirm; if coal, it seems to have been a sort of *kennel* coal. I give the words of the original: '*Gignit et lapidem gagatem plurimum optimumque; est autem nigro-gemmeus et ardens igni admotus, incensus serpentes fugat, adtritu calefactus adplicita detinet æque ut succinum.*' Scholars and antiquaries must decide the question; and they will call to mind what the learned Casaubon says upon the subject in his notes on Theophrastus, and compare the words of Pliny with those of Solinus.

Of the use of coal by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers there is no doubt at all. The passage following, from the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' decides the question without referring to others. '*Anno* 852.—At this time, Cedred, abbot of Medeshamstede (i.e. Peterborough) and the monks let to Wulfred the land at Sempringham, on the condition that after his day the land should revert to the monastery; and that Wulfred should give the land at Sleaford to Medeshamstede; and that he should give every year to the monastery sixty fothers of wood, and twelve fothers of *pit-coal* (A.-S. *græfan*), and six fothers of fagots, and two tuns of bright ale, and two neats for the slaughter, and six hundred loaves, and ten measures (*mittan*) of Welsh ale and every year a horse; and thirty shillings; and for one night give entertainment.' A goodly arrangement evidently, and on which it is only necessary to remark that we still retain the Anglo-Saxon word '*fother*'—that is to say, '*a load*,' as applied to lead. In Chaucer's days it was of more general signification, as became the poor parson of the town; 'benign and wonder diligent' was the Plowman's brother. Even take the old poet's words as an illustration:—

> With him there was a plowman, was his brother,
> That hadde ylaid of dong *ful many a fother*;
> A trewe swinker, and a good was he,
> Living in pees and parfite charitie.
> God loved he beste with alle his herte,
> At alle times, were it gain or smerte;
> And than his neighebour right as himselve.
> He wolde threshe, and therto dike and delve,
> For Christes sake, for every poure wight,
> Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.

Good care would he have taken that every collier had his *raker* each night, of full weight and *fother*. A false weight would have been an abomination.

Still referring to the use of coal by the Anglo-Saxons there is a remark of Mr. Wright in another of his publications on '*cinders*,' or '*synder*,' which is worth transcribing. 'As all these are Saxon words, and not derived from the Latin, we may suppose that they represent things known to the Anglo-Saxon race from an early period, and as charcoal does not produce *scoria*, or cinder, it is perhaps not going too far to suppose that the Anglo-Saxons were acquainted with mineral coal.' A strong point so put becomes doubly strong.

In descending years we find that in the days of Hubert Walter, Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 1193–1205, seacoal—the *carbones maris* of Du Cange—is mentioned as paying custom at Billingsgate. The term *seacoal* was then the common one. Murchison's remarks relate to the formation, not to the way of the sea by which they came. 'We are perhaps warranted in believing that a theory of the formation of coal, which should embrace as its chief element a widely extended series of shallow and partially enclosed seas fringed with swampy forests of water-loving plants, and subject to frequent subsidence, is most in harmony with observed phenomena.'

Looking to our own county, where there are considerable seams of coal—the thick as well as the thin layer—the earliest mention made of it as fuel, if *carbones* is to be so rendered, is about 1250, when Philip de Benthal grants a right of road over all his estate for carriage of stone, *coals*, and timber. A little later—in 1260 or 1263—Sir John de Haleton was granted, by Walter de Clifford, lord of Corfham, 'license to dig coals within the forest of La Clie, to sell or give away.' There is no doubt but that it was used in this county from very early times, though not generally. Indeed, the prejudice against the use of it was for a long time very great. There was a proclamation against its use by Edward I., and it is said that a man was actually hanged for committing the crime of burning it within the limits of the city. In the time of Edward VI. we have evidence from Dr. Keyes' book

that coal smoke was thought pestiferous, as the reader may see by referring to the passage quoted by the historians of Shrewsbury, and in old Stow's 'Chronicle,' under 1616. In James I.'s time he tells us that 'within thirty yeares last the nice dames of London would not come into any house or room where sea-coales were burned, nor willingly eat of the meat that was either sod or roasted with sea-cole fire.' What a change had taken place when coals took the name of the Duke of Bridgewater's Black Diamonds!

The whole passage in Stow is so remarkable that I think it worth extracting at length. The reader can pass it by if it is tedious to him.

'Such hath been the plenty of wood in England for all the uses that within man's memory it was thought impossible to have any want of wood in England; but, contrary to former imaginations, such hath been the great expense of timber for navigation, with infinite increase of building of houses, with the great expense of wood to make household furniture, calkes, and other vessels not to be numbered; and of carts, wagons, and coaches, besides the extreme waste of wood in making iron, burning of brick and tile; that whereas, in the year of our Lord 1306, King Edward the First by proclamation prohibited the burning of sea-cole in London and the suburbs, to avoid the sulferous smoke and savour of that firing; and in the same proclamation commanded all persons to make their fires of wood, which was performed by all (smiths only excepted): yet at this present, through the great consuming of wood as aforesaid, and the neglect of planting of woods, there is so great scarcity of wood through the whole kingdom that not only the Citie of London, all haven townes, and in very many parts within the land the inhabitants in general are constrained to make their fires of sea-cole or pit-cole—even in the chambers of honourable personages—and through necessity, which is the mother of all arts, they have of very late yeares devised the making of iron, the making of all sorts of glasse, and burning of bricke with sea-cole or pit-cole.'

Having mentioned above the Duke of Bridgewater's Black Diamonds, it may be stated here that 'the so-called *coal*

money has long been regarded as nothing more than refuse pieces thrown aside by the makers of beads, trinkets, and other ornaments of the Roman population,' for which they used the Kimmeridge coal of Dorset. Kimmeridge, beyond Gad Cliff, is the land of bituminous shale, which abounds in the dark blue beds. 'This cliff,' says the writer of an interesting article in the 'Quarterly Review' on Dorset, 'has a profile of five hundred feet of sheer cliff and tangled face, and a famous specimen of a cycadoid tree among the *débris* of the oolite. This tree is encased in a bed of limestone, the pith is discernible, surrounded with bundles of fibre, and the bark is well defined.'

Looking to the local price of coal, I observe that on James II.'s visit to Shrewsbury, August 26, 1687, the corporation paid nine shillings a ton for it; and in the time of Charles I. the mayor was requested to appoint a person to weigh all *seacoals* coming to this town. The term is a curious one for an *inland* place; but so we still speak of *mile stones*, though made of *cast iron*.

I do not think my Talking Friend knew much about coal previous to the time of Elizabeth, when he spoke of that of Emstrey, and of the Low Country, by which he evidently meant Ketley, near Wellington. Traces are yet visible of the Emstrey workings, but they were soon superseded by the coals of Ketley. The visitor when there will recollect he is on the Watling Street.

One day, when I was talking about the coalpits at Shorthill, I was surprised by my Talking Friend's telling me that Tattersall's vessel, in which Charles II. made his escape from Brighthelmstone (one might have thought him an old Sussex person by his so calling it), was chartered with seacoal for Poole. I could not help smiling when he favoured me with this information; and on asking him how he came by it his leaves rustled pleasantly, and he said: 'As usual, I got it from the priest of Hanwood, whose friend Roger, the parson of Easthope, gave him the whole account of it as they chatted under my boughs. They had been fishing on the Rea as far as the Lea Bridge, and sat themselves down to rest with a basket full of trouts. I quite recollect Roger's saying he

knew the brothers William, John, Richard, Humfrey, and George Penderel, and all about Boscobel and the White Ladies—which was only half a mile beyond—and how the priest of Hanwood *did* laugh (unused, as he was, to over much mirth ; he had so many sorrows) when his friend Roger told him of the Merry Monarch's disguise—"a leathern doublet with pewter buttons, and a pair of old green breeches, and a jump coat (as the country calls it) of the same green, a pair of his own stockings with the tops cut off, because embroidered, and a pair of stirrup stockings, which were lent him at Madeley, and a pair of old shoes, cut and slashed to give ease to his feet, an old gray quarry hat without a lining, a noggen shirt of the coarsest linen, his face and his hands made of a reeky complexion by the help of the walnut-tree leaves."'

All this, however, is out of historical order. It came in, nevertheless, as it was told, and it is pleasant at any time to hear a pleasant story. And besides all that relates to the Penderels and Boscobel has a claim on Shropshire. 'Formerly,' added my Talking Friend, 'we heard much of the Boscobel oak, but it was soon cut to pieces under a sense of mistaken loyalty. Had it been left alone it would have been a glorious tree by this time, and the marvel of the neighbourhood.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST FIVE EDWARDS.

Eplit fellr ekki lángt frá eikinni.
The apple falls not far from the oak.—ICELANDIC PROVERB.
RASK's *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, p. xxvii.

Accipitremque timens pennis trepidantibus ales
Audet ad humanos fessa venire sinus.
Nec se vicino dubitat committere tecto,
Quæ fugit infestos territa cerva canes.
OVID, *Ex Pont. Epist.* II. ii. 37.

Some are worthy, well esteemed;
Some without worth are so deemed;
Others of so bare a spirit,
They have nor esteem nor merit.
GEORGE WITHER, *Shepherd's Hunting*, ii. 157.

WE had been referring to the early days of Edward I. when suddenly there was a manifest shaking of the upper branches of my Talking Friend, and I knew, from experience, that he had something more than usual to say.

As fire lies hid until the smoke be spied,

so, in another way, was it with him. Until his leaves and boughs were stirred, under evident emotion, he made rare communications.

On the present occasion he said something oracularly, like an oak of Dodona: 'The date of my birth was rather before than after the time that Edward I. fixed his residence in Shrewsbury, which, as you know, was in 1277. Indeed, I was quite an oakling in 1292, when I very well recollect those who came from that side report that Montfort Bridge was broken down and impassable. The account my time-honoured father gave of my birth is sufficiently curious, but he always told the same story; and as you take a great interest in my fortunes I will tell it to you. In a few years more my

memory might not serve me, and the little history would be lost to the Rea side, which has always respected my age.

'His story was this. One day, late in the year, when his acorns were full ripe, a great bird, which he had not observed hovering about, fell heavily into his boughs. For some time he could not make out what it was, for it kept fluttering and fluttering, till after something like a moan and a sigh all was still. That evening a gale freshened from Habberley Hole, shook his branches, and the great bird fell heavily to the ground. It turned out to be an eagle, with an arrow shaft sticking under its wing—struck, probably, among the crags of Pontesford Hill.'

And I presently called to mind that spot over which I had scrambled in my boyhood—the very spot old Tredithic loved so much, and hard by which he dwelt, half Cymry, half Druid, as has been recorded in an earlier chapter. Indeed, almost all districts have their 'Aetos, or Eagle's Cliff,' like Homer's Ithaca; and so was it on the off-side of Pontesford Hill, facing the Oak's Woods.

But I had interrupted my Talking Friend, and he continued:—

'That very same night there came a fox from the woods above, and, as their wont is, plucked off some feathers and tried to suck the blood. As, however, none flowed—for the eagle had been dead too long—he forthwith commenced his repast on the body of the bird, when suddenly there was a growl and a snarl and the fire-flash of a wolf's eyes close upon him, and Reynard was obliged to decamp in a hurry and give up his booty, which was soon made short work of by the gaunt intruder.'

Upon which I ventured to ask, '*You*, then, on the Rea side had wolves thus late?' for I knew very well that they remained in the fastnesses of Wales, notwithstanding the old tribute of the 300 heads paid annually in Edgar's days.

To which he replied: 'Although a good deal of wood was what you technically call *assorted*—that is to say, cleared and fitted for tillage—about this time, yet was the country hereabouts covered with wood, and wolves remained amongst us, though scarce, happily, after the reign of Edward I., who

again took charge for their destruction in Wales. All about this district, in that great murrain that there was about this time amongst the sheep, they constantly made their appearance from out of Wales, attracted, like vultures, by the scent of carrion, and destroyed many. No doubt you will find some account of it in your histories. At the very time we are speaking of my aged father told me that a *swaincote* was held for their destruction in the forest of the Stiperstones, and all the freeholders in the neighbourhood went to it.'

'Stop,' said I, 'I must put on my thinking cap, for you are over-running my historical remembrance, if not my knowledge.' But I soon bethought me that swan, swang, svein, and swain must all be the same words—the *swain* and *swend* of the Scandinavians. In fact, Sweyne of the Forked Beard, the father of Canute, was the conqueror of England. A country swain bears the same name, with a difference. Of the wayth, or swarff-money I only know that it was paid for *watch* and *ward*, and that some superstitious ceremonies attended it—that it was to be paid before the rising of the sun, and that the party was to go three times round the cross, and to say, with some sworn brother as a witness—

> My swarff-money, it is paid,
> And in pit-hole duly laid.

The sheep murrain alluded to is thus recorded by Stow in his 'Chronicle' under the year 1275: 'A rich man of France brought into Northumberland a Spanish ewe, as big as a calfe of two yeares, which ewe, being rotten, infected so the country that it spread over all the realm. This plague of murrain continued twenty-eight yeares ere it ended, and was the first rot that ever was in England.'

And thus, having satisfied myself as to my Talking Friend's accuracy, I was curious to know how he was going to associate the story of the eagle, the fox, and the wolf with the particulars of his birth and locality, and accordingly I asked him to proceed with his narrative. Whereupon he replied: 'Methinks you are something too tedious in investigating data, and in rooting into antiquarian matters; but, after all, you must be excused, for what was everyday know-

ledge to my time-honoured father and myself must be almost an enigma in these days.' And he added, 'The rest of the story is contained in a nutshell. All that the fox and the wolf had left, as you may suppose, was little—the caul and the purtenance only. On to this—you will recollect the wind was blowing fresh from Habberley Hole—one of the acorns of the time-honoured oak fell, and there it stuck, covered by the sebaceous envelope. Early in the morning, however, that very sagacious and wise bird, who had many to provide for in his well-covered nest—the magpie—espied the treasure and flew off with it for its young; and it was just in the very place where I now stand that the acorn dropped out of its case into a hole, took root, and became a tree—no less a one than your Talking Friend, now many centuries old, wrinkled and gnarled, and sadly cut about, the worse for wear, and full of infirmities!'

And I thanked the grand old tree for his information, and I wished that he might still live on, and that my infirmities were as few as his, for I knew that I had much to answer for, though compared with him mine were but days of years. As the aged patriarch said, '*Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been!*' With such a father and such a mother I ought to be better than I am!

GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!

Before quitting the simple narrative of his birth I may as well mention that my Talking Friend and his time-honoured father always mentioned the magpie with a sort of half-respect. Indeed, I have often heard the former say that it was a bird much to be watched, and that the very covering of its nest showed that it could disclose much if it would. And he would repeat an old Saxon saw, which ran thus:—

> One sorrow, two mirth,
> Three a wedding, four death.

And I thought again how ancient superstitions descended through all time. From the days of the Hebrews till now the bird hath '*moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.*' The Greek was not less observant of their flight, and as for

the Roman, from the very earliest days of their great city the word was

Magna fides avium est, experiamur aves.

I will not say that the same poet, in the 'Metamorphoses,' refers to our magpie, but what he says is as true of that bird as of jay or woodpecker.

Nunc quoque in alitibus facundia prisca remansit
Raucaque garrulitas, studiumque immane loquendi.

It is our magpie probably that Pliny refers to in these words: '*Nuper et adhuc tamen rara, ab Apennino ad urbem versus cerni cepere picarum genera, quæ longâ insignes caudâ variæ appellantur.*' It is to this that Martial alludes:—

Pica loquax certâ dominum te voce saluto:
Si me non videas, esse negabis avem.

Even to this day the magpie, to say nothing of the cleverness of his nest, is an ominous bird. Every child has something to say about him, and within my recollection no dairymaid in the midland counties but looked to him for information about her lover. Wherever seen it is a notable bird, and Mr. Yarrell is right: 'Although no bird in our catalogue is better known than the magpie, yet accustomed only as we are to see it at a distance in the fields, or penned up in a cage, where its plumage is soiled and disfigured by confinement, its singular beauty is almost unsuspected; yet, with an agreeable variety and arrangement in the principal colours, the black and the white are as pure as the green, the blue, and the purple, with their ever-varying reflections, are brilliant.' Then again, as regards his nest, nothing can be better constructed for security against his enemies; it is of an oval shape and large, framed on the outside with sharp thorny sticks, strongly interwoven, and forming a dome over the top. The framework of sticks is plastered with earth on the insides, and afterwards covered with a lining of fibrous roots and dry grass. One small aperture is left in the side, just large enough to admit the parent bird, who generally sits with her 'head to the hole, ready to quit the nest on the slightest alarm.'

No wonder that the Old Oak was fond of a bird so clever.

On referring again to Edward I. and his times, I was not slow to pick out that the time-honoured Old Oak thought him one of the greatest of England's kings, notwithstanding his harsh conduct whether as regards Wales or Scotland, on which subject, first and last, the priest of Hanwood had said much. Evidently, however, from my Talking Friend's account, his father knew little of Baliol or Bruce. It was what was near at hand that chiefly concerned him—a very great contest, indeed, as every Welshman said who came down from the Montgomery side.

> A greater strife is when two tides doe meete,
> Both of one force, like mighty straggling streames,
> I meane when men do strive of equal sprite ;
> The robe is ript, or rented through the seames ;
> Great troubles grow in sundry civil realmes,
> For whilst the one in chiefest room is plaste,
> The other comes, and pulls him downe in haste.

The first matter attaching to this reign recollected by the Old Oak was the determination of Edward to subjugate Llewelyn, and his removal of the court to Shrewsbury, previous to his own arrival there in 1277, shortly after which followed Llewelyn's submission and the peace of Abercenwy. 'The Cymry, however,' the Old Oak would say, 'were not a people who readily brooked submission ; and so, in 1282, the war, as it is called, of Llewelyn and David burst out afresh, but by the return of Edward, and by the advance of his army, it was soon put down. Snowdon, as we Saxons called the Craigian-eryri of the Cymry, could not resist his might.'

It was when speaking of this campaign that my Talking Friend informed me that Telford's was not the first bridge over the Menai Strait ; for Edward, after Anglesea was taken, had a bridge of boats made to assist him in passing over to the range we now call Snowdonia. The curious reader will find the account of it in Peter Langtoft's 'Chronicle.'

> In Wales it is fulle stronge to werre in Wyntertide,
> For wynter is ther long, whan somer is here in pride.
> That was to them grete pyne, that werrying undertoke,
> And Snowdoun did Leuline well to kepe and loke.
> The kyng knowe no side, how he mot come ther inne,
> Nouther go nor ride, ne how he suld it wynne,

A water in Snowdoun rennes, Auber is the name,
An arme of the sea men kennes, the depnes may not ame.
The kyng contrived ther over, a brigge for to make,
And of Leulyn to covere, Snowdoun for to take,
Botes he toke and barges, the sides togidere knytte,
Over the water that lage is, fro bank to bank raught itte.
Thei fleked tham overthuert, justely for to ligge ;
Over the water smerte was so ordeyned a brigge.

Different accounts are given of Llewelyn's death. Turner follows that which attributes it to the treachery of one of his own countrymen. The narrative in old Stow's 'Chronicle' runs thus : 'Leoline, prince of Wales, came down from the mountain of Snowdon to Montgomery, and was at length taken at Builth Castle, where, using reproachful words against the Englishmen, Roger le Strange ran upon him and cut off his head, leaving his dead body on the ground. Sir Roger Mortimer caused the head of Leoline to be set upon the Tower of London *crowned with ivie.* This was the end of Leoline, betrayed by the men of Builth, and this was the last prince of the Britayne's blood that bore rule and dominion in Wales.'

The rest of this painful story, at which the Old Oak always shuddered—and my Talking Friend spoke with the most undisguised abhorrence—may be given in Sharon Turner's words, who is never unjust to Edward, but always just to the Welsh :—

'David attempted to renew the war, and summoned his nobles to his aid ; but tho' he was able to protract the struggle till the autumn, he was chased, beaten, and taken ; and Edward, always ferocious in his revenge, again evinced his insensibility to princely honour in his treatment of his captive. He caused him, after a parliamentary sentence at Shrewsbury, to be drawn on a hurdle, and hanged, and sent his amputated head to London. For what crime, which death could not expiate, were the bodies of these princes thus insulted ? The defence of a throne which they had been born to, and the assertion of the independence of a country which had always disdained the yoke of an invader. The union of Wales with England was advantageous to both. But the resistance of the Welsh kings was too natural to excite

resentment in a generous enemy ; too courageous, from the inadequacy of their means, not to deserve his admiration ; and too consonant with the national feelings of their countrymen not to command his respect for its patriotism, and his pity for their fall. But Edward's character, like that of Henry I., exhibits great mental eminence, unconnected, where ambition was concerned, with the amiable virtues of the heart. His prudence never erred, but his sensibility, touched too keenly by revenge, rarely acted right.'

It is mentioned above that Llewelyn's head was 'crowned with ivie.' If so, say the authors of the 'History of Shrewsbury,' 'it was in derision of those claims on the crown of Britain to which he was encouraged by his bards.' Others said the crown was of silver, and that it fulfilled the prophecy of Merlin that he should be *crowned in London* when the English money should be *coined round*. On which hangs a curious bit of history, for which the reader is referred to Hearne's Preface to Robert of Gloucester's 'Chronicle,' where he will see the difference in wording between Stow and Peter Langtoft. The words in Stow's 'Chronicle' stand thus, and vary little in his 'Summarie,' edition 1604 :—

'Whereas before this time the penny was wont to have a double cross, with a crest, in such sort that it might easily be broken in the middest, or into four quarters, and so to be made into half-pence or farthings ; which order was taken in the year of Christ 1106, the 7th of Henry I. ; it was now ordained that pence, half-pence, and farthings should be made round ; whereupon was made these verses following :

'Edward did smite *round peny*, half-peny, farthing,
The crosse passes the bond of all throughout the ring ;
The king's side was his head, and his name written,
The crosse side, what citie it was in, coyned or smitten.
To poor man, ne to priest, the peny fraises nothing,
Men give God aye the least, they feast Him with a farthing :
A thousand, two hundred, fourscore years, and mo,
On this money men wondered, when it first began to goe.'

Something has been said in a former page of the parliament at Acton Burnel held in 1283, and pity 'tis that that increase of liberty should be connected with so sad and cruel a history

as the execution of David. On this occasion Shrewsbury sent two deputies 'in the first national convention in which the commons had any share *by legal authority*, for that summoned by Montfort cannot be called such.' The names of these early representatives are lost.

In mentioning Llewelyn's 'ivie crown' the names of the bards were coupled with it. It was from this traditional story that the 'Massacre of the Bards' originated; but it is believed to be a mere story, as an ordinance against their turbulent excitement is reported as late as 2 Henry IV. The time-honoured Oak had never heard the report of it, for I put the question to my Talking Friend, when, to his high satisfaction, I recited beneath his shade the grand commencement of Gray's ode :—

'Ruin seize thee, ruthless King !
Confusion on thy banners wait !
Though fann'd by conquest's crimson wing,
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor e'en thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears !'
Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride
Of the first Edward scatter'd wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Gloucester stood aghast in speechless trance :
'To arms !' cried Mortimer, and couch'd his quivering lance.

On a rock, whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
Rob'd in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the poet stood ;
(Loose his beard and hoary hair
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air).
And with a master's hand, and prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.

Every leaf of the Oak shook as the stanzas ended, and he said with emotion 'that the lines would have made the time-honoured Oak young again, and were enough to make old Tredithic *walk*, whose heart and soul were devoted to the Cymry.'

And he presently added, with no little smartness, 'Not long ago I heard you tell some philosophic observer beneath my shade that some white ant or another would not touch the wood of the *nux vomica*, characterised by a remarkable bitter taste; but I feel sensibly that there are plenty of oak-parasites at work on my vitals. And yet, before the days of the first Edward were out, Nicholas Wartineri—no mean Bailiff of Ford—and Thomas le Wartiner, and Robert de Mele were pleased to note, in passing, what a straight sapling I was. Indeed, I was the delight of William Burt, an inhabitant of Mele in those days, who knew all the ins and outs of the country, and would often say there was not such an oakling as I was between this and the Breiddin. The consequence was that I became somewhat vain of my beauty —and shall I tell you how my vanity was put down?'

Quite surprised at my Talking Friend's vivacity, I entreated him to tell me this bit of personal history, and he did so thus:—

'One autumn morning, when the dew lay long, I was boasting of the smoothness and the shine of my bark, and of its white spots of vigorous health under the first cuticle, when my time-honoured father, observing in me too much of youth's pride and vanity, said drily, "Take care that the men of the wild moors do not pass this way and try the strength of their whittles on you; they would soon put an end to your silly boastings, and the vain swellings of intemperate youth." My good father was evidently displeased, and wished to correct what was wrong in me; and I *stood* corrected for many a year, and bore many a hard blow from the passers-by.

'At the time I did not know what he alluded to, though I have often heard people say since, "Cut your stick," knowing, probably, as little of the origin of the saying as I did then. Many years afterwards, when my vanity was suppressed, and I had grown, as by stealth, into a goodly tree, he told me the meaning of the words, and how they alluded to a very ancient tenure by *petit* sergeantry attaching to "THE MORE," near Bridgenorth, "the king's tenant of which had to appear yearly in the Exchequer, on the morrow of Michaelmas Day, with a hazel rod, of a year's growth and a cubit's length, and two

knives. The treasurer and the barons being present, the tenant was to attempt to sever the rod with one of the knives, which (apparently to prove the soundness of the rod) was to bend or break. The other knife was to do the same work at one stroke, and then to be given to the king's chamberlain for royal use." Such was the story, and I quite well recollect your uncle John's saying that Counsellor Priswick, of Shrewsbury, told him the custom was still, in a measure, retained, and that when the new sheriffs are presented to the barons the officer of the court makes proclamation, saying, "O yes, O yes, O yes! Tenants of a piece of waste ground called 'The Moors,' in the county of Salop, come forth and do your service." Upon which the senior alderman present stepped forward and cut a wand with a billhook—the same custom with a slight alteration. Counsellor Priswick added that the earliest recorded notice of the tenure dated back to 13 John, Anno 1211. Whichever of the knives had cut me—the bad one or the good one,' continued my Talking Friend, 'it would have put an end to my vanity and my life, and I should not have been standing to welcome, with my true heart of oak, the birth of a grandchild to our good Queen Victoria. God bless her!'

Such was his narrative, pointing to the custom of cutting sticks in the Exchequer, which is the origin of the phrase 'Cut your stick.' The difficulty is in connecting '*The More*' with the City of London, but as it was once the property of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem it has been suggested that 'this land may have devolved upon their corporation with other property of the Knights of Jerusalem which they are known to have possessed; that the senior alderman may represent the senior knight; and that the situation of the land may have been subsequently lost by neglect and the distance of Shropshire from the capital.'

Mr. Eyton remarks: 'The only intelligible object of this service was, of course, that the king should be annually supplied with a knife of uncommon temper. We may conjecture endlessly and vainly as to how he came to look to his tenant of the secluded Mere for such an implement. Imagination presents some incident of a royal chase in the Forest of

Morf or of Shirlet—some moment of kingly peril and opportune aid—a lost or broken *couteau de chasse* replaced by the trusty blade of some watchful and well-rewarded follower.'

Whatever be the real history of the matter, very curious in all its particulars, the application of it by the Old Oak shows its antiquity, and the recapitulation of it by my Talking Friend his great simplicity. Meanwhile we leave it in the hands of what Hawes, in his 'Pastime of Pleasure,' calls

The noble veteran, Sir Consuetude.

It has been stated more than once before that the Old Oak seemed to know little about matters which did not immediately concern his locality or the county. As far as my recollection goes, I never heard him even mention Scottish affairs, in which Edward was so much concerned, except in a general way; if he knew anything of Balliol, or Wallace, or the Bruce and the Red Comyn, it was never a subject of remark with him, and very probably he had never heard of the celebrated coronation stone removed from Scotland to Westminster, or of the battle of Dunbar.

Upon one occasion, when there was a tremendous flood, by which the whole valley of the Rea was inundated, the Old Oak was heard to say, 'It might be compared to the great flood of Boston, which Testa de Pelegrino reported to John de Drayton, the abbot of Shrewsbury in those days, and which the priest of Hanwood heard tell of in the abbot's parlour, when, as he said, their stews were flooded and Coleham deluged, so great was the hurry of the waters in the Meole Brook as it entered the Severn, almost driving back its waters in their course towards the Preaching Friars.'

In these days there was a great talk of the town-guild of Shrewsbury, but in its modern sense it had been in existence from the days of John and Henry II.—in every sense, and at all times, being a protection and a primitive friendly society. The gille, or guild, of St. Knud, in Sweden, dates rather earlier —from about A.D. 1100. The value of fraternities, Brödraskabs, Gelubdes, or clubs, was much greater in disturbed and troubled times than in modern days of civilisation. The term is derived, of course, from the A.-S. *gildan*, to pay;

'but,' said my Talking Friend, 'the payment was always for mutual profit and advantage; and many an old family has been saved by the cadet in a guild.' Probably he was not very well informed on the subject generally, but what he said was, in the main, true, and his time-honoured father never mentioned a guild but in terms of the highest respect. Mr. Kemble's words on this subject are much to the purpose, and from them the reader will pick out the difference between the Saxon *gylds* and the *guilds* of the Plantagenets and later days—still, however, all looking one way.

'The general outline of an urban constitution in the earlier days of the Saxons may have been somewhat of the following character. The freeman, either with or without the co-operation of the lord, but usually with it, formed themselves into associations or clubs called *gylds*. These must not be confounded either on the one side with the Hanses (in Anglo-Saxon Hósa), i.e. trading guilds, or on the other with the guilds of crafts ("*collegia opificum*") of later ages. Looking to the analogy of the country gylds or tithings described in detail in the ninth chapter of the first book, we may believe that the whole free town population was distributed into such associations; but that in each town, taken together, they formed a compact and substantive body, called in general the *Burhwaru*, and perhaps sometimes more especially the *Ingang-burhware*, or "burghers' club." It is also certain, from various expressions in the boundaries of charters, as "burhware meed," "burhware meare," and the like, that they were in possession of real property as a corporate body. Whether they had any provision for the management of corporation revenues we cannot tell, but we may unhesitatingly affirm that the gylds had each its common purse, maintained, at least in part, by private contributions, or what we may more familiarly term *rates*, levied under their by-laws. These gylds, whether in their original nature religious, political, or merely social unions, rested upon another and solemn principle: they were sworn brotherhoods between man and man, established and fortified upon "aδ and wed," oath and pledge: and in them we consequently recognise the germ of those sworn communes, *communæ* or *communiæ*, which, in the times

of the densest seignorial darkness offered a noble resistance to episcopal and baronial tyranny, and formed the nursing-cradles of popular liberty.'

It is deserving of note that as every gyld, of whatever sort, was a free association for mutual benefit in the early days of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, we, in these days of high civilisation, are 'slowly' acknowledging the principle, as Mr. Kemble remarks. Indeed, Odd Fellows, and Foresters, and *hoc genus omne* all run in the same groove ; and some old worthy of Saxon extraction might rise up to say with Minerva—

> Non omnia grandior ætas,
> Quæ fugiamus, habet : seris venit usus ab annis.
> Consilium ne sperne meum.

Without laying claim to any particular antiquarian exactness, there is, indeed, some little confusion of time in it. The following extract from Mr. John Hannet's 'Forest of Arden,' with reference to the College or Guild of Krole, will serve to fill up what is above hinted at by Mr. Kemble. Clearly there were two sorts of guilds, religious and secular, though one often merged in the other.

'These guilds were established for the performance of works of charity, and for the regular observance of certain religious services, and in the middle ages they had also the management of the public amusements of the people. These amusements were considered by the ruling powers of those days to be so intimately connected with the peace and welfare of society that they were placed under the protection of religious guilds for the purpose of perpetuating their existence ; for it was thought that if they were suffered to fall into disuse the people, being bereft of their customary sources of relaxation, would employ their vacant time in schemes of mischief. They managed also the religious processions and shows. The heathens had their mysteries, so had the Christians ; and divine worship, in like manner, was accompanied with flowers and perfumes and clouds of incense, and the religious edifices were adorned with images, pictures, and symbolical designs. In processions and public shows the clergy bore a conspicuous part —some guilds were established

by their particular direction. Miracle plays were performed, and contributed a splendour to the rites of religion peculiar to the times in which they flourished. The celebration was usually kept at one of the annual fairs, or feast or dedication of the Church, which, by increasing the number of visitors, brought additional profit to the trades associated in the secular guilds. On these occasions pleasure was in the ascendant with the masses, and no feeling indulged but anxiety to witness and to give increased splendour to the ceremonies.'

On reading such a passage as this any old Shrewsbury boy will at once call to mind the Shrewsbury Show (of which something may be said in another place), connecting with it the guild of Preston and the Country Mysteries; and, then, that guilds, and fairs, and wakes should be connected, is a matter of course, for as Thomas Churchyard says, who knew Shrewsbury so well—

All people draw unto a goodly fair.

Very probably, too, a religious guild and a fair were not what Aristotle called an Ἀττικὴ παροικία, or, as a Dorset man might speak—

As near akin
As Lewson Hill and Pillenden Pen:

that is to say, were neighbours enough, but with no familiar intercourse; on the contrary, there was mutual help and comfort in them, and much pleasure also.

Et mala sunt vicina bonis; errore sub illo
Pro vitio virtus crimina sæpe tulit.

So said the priest of Hanwood to Robert de Cottingham somewhere about this time, who had received a protection from King Edward I., under the title of '*Parson* of the Chapel of the King's Castle of Salop,' St. Michael's Chapel that is, which was some time 'endowed with the titles of Cruck Meole, Sibberscot, or Sibalddescote, and Arlescot, in the parish of Pontesbury,' which will account for the intercourse between the priest of Hanwood and the chaplain of St. Michael's, just above referred to, a scholar evidently, and no malcontent either, though he did perhaps pay over a part of his tithe to Robert de Cottingham. Not one he to say

with Mendoza, 'He's like a common mygriat, too; I cannot go for him; he must be rooted out, he must.' The good priest had more forbearance. Not improbably, with wake, and show, and fair, and guild before him, he had arrived likewise at the conclusion that the *fault* was not in them, and that true liberty

> Always with right reason dwells
> Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being;
> Reason in men obscur'd, or not obey'd,
> Immediately inordinate desires
> And upstart passions catch the government
> From reason, and to servitude reduce
> Men till then free.

I may note in passing that what is now called the Town-hall in Edward's days was the 'Guilde, or Boothe-hall.' Hence we may infer that, originally, meetings were held in the open air, and the people protected in bad weather by an awning or booth. This ancient custom was that of the Thing at the Thingvalla, in Iceland—pronouncing *Ting*—still retained, and properly pronounced, in our word *hus-ting*.

One day my Talking Friend said to me hastily, 'Francis Ferrington had just come back from the Hay-gate, close upon the Wrekin, and had said in our hearing that the recently planted trees were growing into a forest. I don't think I ever mentioned to you the old hermit of the Wrekin, or, as it was called in my early days, Mount Gilbert, one of whom my time-honoured father used to speak often, and over whose door, he said, was this inscription in letters of bark :—

HERE AND IN HEAVEN IS REST.'

Expecting some curious local information, I replied at once that I had never heard of this old hermit, and I knew not why the Wrekin was called Mount Gilbert, throwing in, by the way, and in hopes of extracting information, that the only old hermit I called to mind at that moment was Athelstan's brother, who is said to have secluded himself in the forest of Morfe. I recollected also that the historian of the Anglo-Saxons had said, 'There were no friars or mendicant orders among them, but they encouraged hermits

and pilgrims, and severe penances, and loved relics, and venerated saints, to whose number they largely contributed, and they practised excommunications.' And I thought of Milton's lines in the 'Comus':—

> Wisdom's self
> Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
> Where with her best nurse, Contemplation,
> She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
> That in the various bustle of resort
> Were all too ruffled and sometimes impair'd.

There was a shaking amongst his old leaves and boughs, and my Talking Friend replied:—

'Whence the Wrekin got the name of Mount Gilbert I cannot tell you, neither did I ever hear my time-honoured father say, though the priest of Hanwood used to speak of the Gilbertins. But the old hermit of Mount Gilbert, he would say, must have been an excellent old man, for his name was in everyone's mouth in these parts, and a man would say of his son, "May he be as good a man as Nicolas de Denton." His fame was up throughout the whole of the country, and between the Wrekin and the Stiperstones there was not a more familiar name.' And this appeared to be all that my Talking Friend knew about him.

I call to mind very little that the time-honoured Oak said further about those times. All that he ever heard of the Welsh insurrection under Llewelyn ap Madoc, as he was called, was that he was taken prisoner near Caus Castle, on Cefn Digold, or the modern Long Mountain—the Welsh name by which, in my childhood I heard it called by such as came from Welshport and that neighbourhood to Wigmore and the Marsh—not the Herefordshire Wigmore connected with the Mortimers, Wigmore's false Mortimer—

> Whose fatal name
> Universal to him of all his line,
> Whether from *fear of death* we fetch the same,
> Or of the *dead scar sinke* we it define,

but the Wigmore near Westbury, at no great distance from Cary Castle.

One circumstance the time-honoured Oak seemed to bear

in mind as occurring in those days, which was the advance of Edward from Bridgenorth to Shrewsbury.

> Ere the Mortimers, who both did band
> Themselves with Lancaster, did understand
> Of our approach our royal armed traine
> At Shrewsburie did front them on the plaine.

And he spoke with bitter scorn and contempt of the treachery of Lord Badelismere (of Adderley and Idsall, afterwards called Shifnall) :—

> Our late false steward, Lord *Badelismere*,
> Confederate with rebellious Lancaster.

Much, indeed, as he detested the favouritism of Gaveston and the Despensers, treachery seemed altogether to overcome his heart of oak nature. Gaveston he would have called

> That insolent, lascivious minion,
> A sovereign's blemish and a country's scorn ;

would have admitted him to have been 'a man extremely hated' ; but he did not think he would have acted the part of a traitor and sold his master. There was a great commotion also, he said, at Shrewsbury when one of the quarters of Sir Andrew de Harcla—called by Drayton Sir Andrew Harckley —was ordered to be set up there. Such barbarities sickened the priest of Hanwood, and could he have spoken his mind effectually he would have denounced them in the market place, in the abbey parlour, despite the abbot, or at the booth-hall.

Of Edward II.'s death, 'without human pity or remorse,' when Berkeley's fair keep as Drayton calls it, 'his last shriek did in his parting hear—

> When those (i' th' depth and dead time of the night)
> Poor simple people that there dwelled hear,
> . . . . . .
> As pitying that most miserable wight
> (Between compassion and obedient fear),
> Turn'd up their eyes, with heaviness oppressed,
> Praying to heaven to give the good soul rest.

Of this dreadful and appalling murder, which 'words want weight' to tell of, the time-honoured Oak had never heard.

My Talking Friend, at all events, never heard him speak of it, as he told me, when his leaves shivered again as I recited the harrowing words from 'The Bard' of Gray:—

> Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
> The winding-sheet of Edward's race.
> Give ample room and verge enough
> The characters of hell to trace.
> Mark the year, and mark the night,
> When Severn shall re-echo with affright
> The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roofs that ring,
> Shrieks of an agonising King!

The lines of Nicol, in the 'Mirror for Magistrates'—'the best poet of all the contributors, Sackville alone excepted,' says Southey in a MS. note—give a sufficient illustration of Gray's lines:—

> Leister, constrained by expresse command,
> To the Lord Berkeley doth his charge restore,
> Whence he conveys me with an armed band
> Unto his castle, seated near the shore,
> 'Gainst which great Severne's raging waves do roar.

Of the many horrors contained in the history of England, this is perhaps one of the fellest and the saddest. My Talking Friend was glad it had never troubled his time-honoured father. Possibly, however, he knew the story but too well, but his heart of oak shuddered to repeat it. Some creaking elm or poplar might have told the story to the winds of heaven, not *he*. '*Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.*' Or, to take an image from the river Rea that flowed close by so musically—

> Deep rivers with soft murmur glide along;
> The shallow roar.

Very ill-satisfied was the priest of Hanwood with the treatment of Edward II.—indolent, effeminate, lacking in judgment, and self-willed as he was—by what in those days was specially called 'THE CLERGY.' Perhaps what old Fuller says will fairly express his sentiments, so far as I was able to collect them from my Talking Friend. After mentioning with proper approbation Walter Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter, and John Stratford, Bishop of Winchester, he says:—

'I find not enough to call a number of the bishops cordial

to the king ; but we have more than a good number of such bishops who ungratefully sided with the queen against her husband and their sovereign. Walter Reynolds, Archbishop of Canterbury, leads the van, preferred to that see at the king's great importunity, and by the pope his "*power of provision*." By the same token that a *far better man*, Thomas Cofham by name, dean of Salisbury (so learned and pious a person that he was generally called the good clergyman), legally elected by the commons, was put by by the pope to make room for this Reynolds. He afterwards complied with the queen, his new mistress, against his old master, active to perform her desires. This some seek in vain to excuse by pleading her imperious spirit, and this archbishop's fearfulness, alleging that cowardliness is rather a defect in nature than a default in morality.'

Having next spoken of Burwush, Burghurshe, or Burghursh, the unworthy Bishop of Lincoln, nephew to the traitor, Lord Badelismere, he then turns to the still more unworthy Adam Tarleton, or Adam de Orleton, Bishop of Hereford—described, says Turner, 'as a man of great worldly sagacity, daring, heedless of the means by which he reached his ends, and now provoked to a settled hatred both of his sovereign and his minister.' This was that man who imitated the oracles of the heathen when the question of Edward's death was mooted, returning answer in the line which follows :—

Edwardum occidere nolite timere bonum est.

'His writing,' continues Fuller in his quaint vein, 'was worse than his preaching. For when such agents set to keep King Edward in Berkeley Castle were, by secret order from Roger Mortimer, commanded to kill him, they, by letters, addressed themselves for advice to this bishop, then not far off at Hereford, craving his counsel what they should do in so difficult and dangerous a matter. He returned unto them a riddling answer, altogether unpointed, which carried in it life and death, was life or death, as variously construed, resolved to be guided and governed wholly by his direction, not to dispute, but do what from him was recommended unto them, as knowing him able both in conscience and policy to advise them.'

'This period,' says Collier, 'written with the ambiguity of an oracle, and inspired by the Delphian spirit, might, according to the different pointings, be construed as a warrant to assassinate the king, or as a dissuasive from so barbarous a practice.'

Dear old Jeremy Taylor! how pointed are his words!

'The counsels of God are not, like the oracles of Apollo, double in their sense, intricate in their expression, secret in their meaning, deceitful in their measures, and otherwise in the event, than they could be in this expectation. But the word of God, in the lines of duty, is open in the face of heaven, bright as the moon, cheerful as the sun's influence; and this is certainly true, that when this becomes obscure, though it may oblige us to a prudent search, yet it finds us not under a guilt, but in so far as it is or may be plainly understood.'

CHAPTER XXV.

EDWARD III. AND RICHARD II.

Nulla sors longa est, dolor ac voluptas
Invicem cedunt.
SENECA, *Thyest.* v. 598.

Let us the hand of God confess
In all these sufferings of our guiltiness.
LORD BROOKE, *Inquisition upon Fame and Honour*, p. 529.

Et sicut hi, qui in brevi tabellâ terrarum situs pingunt, ita in parvo isto volumine cernas adumbrata, non expressa signa virtutum.—S. HIERON. *ad Heliodor.* Ep. LX. tom. i. 334, E.

Never did any public misery
Rise of itselfe; God's plagues still grounded are
On common stains of our humanity;
And to the flame which ruineth mankind
Man gives the matter, or at least gives wind.
LORD BROOKE, *Treatise of Warres*, p. 529. British Poets.

THE limited knowledge of the time-honoured Old Oak has been alluded to before. His chief information, indeed, referred to early days and early times, on which he used to dwell with more than the garrulity of age. Not that his *general* information was small—the reader will have probably come to a contrary conclusion—but it was, after all, his *local* knowledge that was great. Seldom was it that the successive priests of Hanwood applied to him for information without receiving more than they anticipated; and the stores he had communicated to my Talking Friend were always forthcoming. In truth, he was one who loved and who desired to impart knowledge, as well as to receive it, without grudging.

Est aliquod meriti spatium, quod nulla furentis
Invidiæ mensura cupit.

As regards the reign of Edward III., considered by

Englishmen as one of the most glorious in their annals, the time-honoured Oak knew less, or said less, than might have been expected. But to an observant person the reason is obvious enough. That monarch's reign had little to do with Shrewsbury, and the priest of Hanwood, through whom, from the abbey *parlour*, most of the news reached the Rea side in those times, was mostly in the habit of reporting what concerned the old town.

All that the Old Oak told my Talking Friend as regarded the commencement of this reign was that, soon after Edward's succession, the burgesses gained, what was not granted them by his father, the new fair of St. Matthew (instead of the old one of St. James), to be held on September 21, and on the preceding and following days; and, withal, what they particularly wanted (as it freed them from dependence on the abbot, who was sometimes testy and imperious), permission to erect mills for corn and malt. The truth is, there was always a contention on this matter between the burgesses and the religious. They were as hard to reconcile (to use a later illustration of Howell's) as the vanes on Saint Sepulchre's Tower, which never looked all four to the same point of the heavens.

One circumstance which occurred at the commencement of this reign became, by accident, a frequent subject of remark with the Old Oak. I mean the treaty with Scotland, than which nothing could have been more unpopular with the people of England, and all brought about, no doubt, by the contrivances of the old queen and Mortimer. It was, in fact, a source of great discontent, and the delivering up of

> That deed named RAGMAN, of renown,
> By which the kings of Scotland had devised
> Their fealty unto the English crown,

was likely to have caused very serious disturbances. But, luckily, they laid the blame on the head of Mortimer—

> That he causde the king to yeelde the Scot,
> To make a peace, townes that were from him got,
> And then withall the charter called RAGMAN.

And thus that storm blew by, with murmurings, however,

and that restlessness which is left behind after the four winds of heaven have been piping loudly.

But how came the Old Oak to hear of this 'roll' or 'list,' as it seems to mean in the 'Vision of Piers Ploughman,' or, as we now hear, of those four large rolls of parchment, or collection of deeds, on which the Scottish nobility were compelled to subscribe fealty and allegiance to Edward I. in 1296?

My Talking Friend answered this question very satisfactorily, for he told me that a son of one Roger le Parmenter, or maker of parchment, supplied the priest of those days at Hanwood with skins from the old skinner's yard under the castle, and as worthless as 'THE RAGMAN'S ROLL' had become a sort of proverb with their craft, showing how an unpopular Act leaves a name behind it. It was the son of this Roger le Parmenter who assisted John de Prees in making the celebrated *Gesina* for the collegiate Church of St. Chad, which the priest of Hanwood had often seen, and had been much struck with. No doubt our children's old game of *scratch-cradle*, or *cratch-cradle* — representing the manger which held the holy Infant—looks this way, and is a curious relic. As for the RAGMAN'S ROLL, so contradictory and unsatisfactory are the several statements made with reference to it (as the reader may see by reference to Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary, Cowel and Nares' Glossary *in verbo*) that in it is thought to have originated the modern word '*rigmarole*,' implying any long-winded yarn of idle words.

As connected more immediately with Shrewsbury, all I can call to mind my Talking Friend's telling me of those times was about the New Charter of May 4, 1341, which tended to show the increase of liberty and the gradual ascendency of the boroughs of England. As the historians of the town say, 'In fact, the lower orders of society were now rising in importance, and even a great nobleman might derive additional weight in the State from his ability to sway the councils of a well-disciplined body of incorporated burgesses'; in which words there is a special reference to Richard Fitz-Alan, Earl of Arundel, who pressed on, with other magnates, the suit for the charter. And it is to be noted that so late as November 17, 1326, his father, Edward

Fitz-Alan, had been seized and executed, and his goods and chattels given to the 'good men of Salop' by Edward II. And the old tree might have said as he told such memories—

> Though now this grained face of mine be hid
> In sap-consuming winter's drizzled snow,
> And all the conduits of my life froze up,
> Yet hath my night of life some memory,
> My wasting lamp some fading glimmer left.

As has been intimated more than once before, the time-honoured Oak spoke little of the great battles of this reign, of that of Cressy, August 26, 1346, after which the Black Prince, as heir-apparent (not as Prince of Wales), adopted the ostrich plume and the motto '*Ich dien*' of the dead king of Bohemia, and of that of Poitiers, September 19, 1356. Rooted to the spot, they little concerned him, and possibly he thought they resulted rather in glory to the nation than in any real benefit. At all events, though heart of oak, he was a lover of peace, and would rather have seen its banner set up for a token than the 'Auriflamme' of France, under which no mercy was to be shown, or the 'Dragon' of Edward, which implied desperate resistance.

The mention of the dragon calls to mind a marvellous story which, my Talking Friend said, one Andrew Mathis, of Chipping Norton, told the time-honoured Oak, of a wonderful dragon which had appeared there. He was a woolstapler of that town, and had come to Shrewsbury on the business of his craft. Evidently there was some strange narrative current at the time, and it shows how news and gossip spread abroad then as now. The woolstapler of that date, as the pedlar of a later one, was clearly a newsmonger. Old Stow gives the full tale, which is worth transcribing, under the year 1349: 'Also this yeare, in the countie of Oxford, nigh unto a town called Chipping Norton, there was found a serpent having two heads and faces like women, one being shaped after the new type of that time, another after the manner of the old attire, and it hadde great wings, after the manner of a flitter-mouse, or batte.' But the story of this marvellous serpent has somewhat interrupted our narrative.

Previous to this two matters greatly excited the priest that was at Hanwood in those days. It has been before stated that the Chapel of St. Michael in Shrewsbury had tithes from Cruck Meole and Pontesbury, but to what amount is not known. About them, in the year 1340, there was a contention, and one Adam de Coverton, the warden of the above-named chapel, accused Lewis de Charleton, of Pontesbury, of obstructing him in the receipt of them. What was the result is not apparent. The king issued a commission, which was pending in 1345, at which time Master Lodowic de Charleton, licentiate in theology, held his own. Anything that concerned 'Crokkemele, Sibaldescote, and Ardescote' necessarily interested the priest of Hanwood; but I did not pick up from my Talking Friend that there was any very great intimacy between this Lodowic and Richard de Preston.

The other matter was one of still greater, indeed of real, importance—the great Town and Gown row in Oxford in the year 1354, far exceeding that in Henry III.'s days, to which reference has been made before. The reason why the priest of Hanwood was so interested was this, that the father of young Walter Sprenchore, the young Shropshire student who, in a drunken frolic, commenced the disturbance, was one of his old and intimate friends, as, I suppose, the family of Sprengcheaux of Plask and Bayston. I again transcribe old Stow:—

'A great dissension fell in Oxford between a scholler and a vintner for a quart of wine, so that the scholler poured the wine on the vintner's head, and brake his head with the pot; by reason whereof a great conflict was made betwixt the schollers of the universitie and the laymen of the towne, in the which many laymen were wounded and about twenty slaine. These troubles continued for the space of two days, and then the religious men of the towne labouring to make peace, the laymen pursued a scholler and wounded him to death. Yet that day the tumult was appeased. But on the morrow the people of the villages about Oxford, being confederate with the laymen of the towne, came with great force, and erected a black banner, whereupon the schollers fled to

their colleges, but the laymen, breaking up the doors, slew many of them, and threw them into their privies; they cut and rent their bookes and bore away what they listed. By this means the universitie was dissolved, the schollers (saving of Merton College) went unto their friends, and so continued more than a year. Many, both schollers and laymen, were indited by the king's justices, amongst the which four burgesses that had been mayors of Oxford were sent unto the Tower of London.'

Such was a matter which at this time occupied the attention of Richard de Preston, priest of Hanwood, or, as they began to call him, RECTOR. But I noted that my Talking Friend rarely called him so, having adopted the term priest from his time-honoured father, who constantly affirmed that in the course of ages no small parish was ever so blessed with good priests as that of Hanwood. They cared for the people, and the people by the Rea side, homely and simple, cared for them.

> Oh! it is good that man should not forget
> Or benefits foregone or brightness set.

But of all other sad accidents—visitations, rather—which troubled the good old priest, and of which the time-honoured Oak never ceased to tell, was the fearful pestilence—pestilences, I might say—which left its mark on this reign. The plagues of Athens, Florence, Marseilles, and the plague of London, burnt out by the fire, seem not to have been so destructive as this, spreading, as it did, far and wide, and in the north of Europe leaving behind it the ominous name of the Black Death. '*Gravis illa et communis pestis*,' says Loccenius, in his 'History of Sweden,' '*Helvetorum altrix, quæ passim orbem terrarum pervagabatur, etiam hic ingentem hominum stragem dedit; unde quod densaret funera, vel, ut alii volunt, quod intumescerent ægrotorum et defunctorum corpora, ceu veneno infesta, densa vel nigra mors sermone patrio dictum est.*' And what the old historian says is illustrated by one of the latest travellers in that country, Horace Marryat.

The whole population of Bohuslän was all but destroyed, and in the parish of Tanun only a boy and a girl were left. 'These two grew up almost as savages, and married, and

from their children the present Håttar race derives its origin. Traces of this great plague may be discerned here as in the long winding Ale Mere of North Jutland. When the country was again explored churches were found overgrown, hidden by trees, villages traced in the forest depths; even now clearings in Buller parish are still left uncultivated.'

Again, 'Most people in their lifetime sneeze, and old-fashioned folk still exclaim, "God bless you!" In Italy, even in the theatres, men rise and wish you "*Felicitá!*" This custom dates from the early age we are speaking of. The first symptom of that great pest was a sneeze; then the pitying bystanders, with sorrowing glance, turned to the newly marked victim and exclaimed, "May God be with you!" Fearful were the ravages of this dire plague in Wesmland; well-nigh every parish is "mentioned as *ode*-waste."' A church in Effdun Forest was found in the last century just as left at this time. 'This church, which was afterwards restored and used for divine service, was built of timber stocks, and octagonal in form.' The same seems to have been the case with the ancient church of Skaga—again explaining the old Anglo-Saxon word *getymbrian*.

Ludvig Holberg, under Waldemar III., in his 'Dannemarks Riges Historie,' gives a like account: '*Udi denne Konges Tüd, nemlig*, 1350, *regierede den ubörlige store Pest, kalden gemœnligen den* SORTE DÖD, *eller Tigerdöden, som strakte sig over heele Europa. Udi Jylland giörde den saadant Nederlag, at man holder for, deraf at være komme de mange store Heeder og Udörkener, som endnu findes.*' That is, 'In this king's time, viz. 1350, that monstrous great pest prevailed, called commonly the Black, or Tiger, Death, which spread itself over all Europe. In Jutland it caused such destruction that it is maintained to have been the cause of those so many great heaths and deserts which are still to be found there.'

The priest that was at Hanwood in those days had heard tell that eighteen out of twenty in all religious houses fell victims to it. Their occupation called them to the pallets of the sick and dying, and they succumbed to the prevalent mortality. The historians of Shrewsbury corroborate the old

priest's remark when they state that 'the episcopal registers of the diocese within which Shrewsbury is situated bear honourable testimony to the assiduity of the secular clergy of the district.'

Painful it is to know that in this great plague, and in that at Florence, of which Boccaccio tells, the same dark features of human nature crop out as did in the plague at Athens, so inimitably recorded by Thucydides. Nothing, indeed, can be more melancholy than that narrative, in which he represents the state of men's minds as indifferent to all laws, human and divine; or, as he puts it, *Θεῶν δὲ φόβος ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμος οὐδεὶς ἀπεῖργε.* Lucretius and Virgil only follow this graphic and minute account of the great historian. As regards the plague under consideration, 'in Shrewsbury it is certain that it introduced a great relaxation of good order, and called forth the coercion of institutions, till then unheard of, which form a new era in our municipal history.'

And thus much for the great plague of Edward III.'s reign, of which the time-honoured Oak spoke more than of any other incident in that long and glorious reign. It might have been surmised that he would have said something of the good Queen Philippa, who died August 15, 1369, greatly beloved—as much so, indeed, as Edward's eldest son, the Black Prince, born at Woodstock, June 15, 1330, died at the archbishop's palace at Canterbury, June 8, 1376—the flower of chivalry, the hero of Cressy and Poitiers, and the father of Richard II. But of these most important incidents to us the venerable tree said little—they did not touch his locality.

In passing on to the reign of Richard II. my Talking Friend told me that the commencement of it in these parts, particularly as regarded the old town, was one of great restlessness; it would appear, indeed, as if from the time of the plague all things had been more or less in disorder. Hence we find that the burgesses at the parliament of Northampton, November 1380, 'filled the court and council with innumerable petitions and memorials against each other.' It was on this occasion that Richard Fitz-Alan, Earl of Arundel, son of Edward Fitz-Alan, who had been seized November 17, 1326, in Edward II.'s time, and whose goods and chattels he

gave to 'the good men of Salop,' acted, as I have always thought, a very noble part in summoning the commonalty to his castle at Shrawardine, or Sheriffworthen, and trying to set things to rights. As has been before hinted, owing to the increase in the power of the commons, he may have had interested motives; but, putting all things together, I judge the act to be one of a forgiving and a great spirit rather than that of a high-reaching one, 'busy to do and to undo'; and one may fairly say

His merits pass our stale invention.

One circumstance which occurred early in this reign was indelibly impressed on my Talking Friend's memory, for the priest that was in after days often spoke of it—I mean the insurrection of Walter of Deptford, commonly called Wat the Tyler. Nicolas Stevenes was the abbot of Shrewsbury at this time, much in favour with Richard II., and it was in the abbey parlour that Sir Hamon, vicar of the Holy Cross, recounted the chief incidents of that rebellion. In some way or another, said the priest of Hanwood alluded to just above, he had gained information on the part which no one else possessed; it was said, indeed, that he had a friend in London who hardly escaped with his life when so many of the Lombards and Flemings perished who could not frame their speech properly — as Stow reports—to say, '*Bread and cheese*'; a profane Shibboleth adopted, no doubt, from the Book of Judges. The same old priest spoke of the great improvements which were made at the abbey about this time, and certainly Sir William Dugdale's account of the old armorial bearings in the abbey window tell of Edward III. and Richard II.'s day clearly enough.

From what my Talking Friend reported on the evidence above alluded to, the imposition of the poll-tax—one shilling a head on all above fifteen years of age—was a very galling one; and he entirely believed in the indecent exposure of the tyler's daughter. Often, too, would he speak of his accomplice Jack Straw, the thatcher, and repeat the text to John Ball's sermon—

When Adam delve, and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?

But though my Talking Friend spoke freely on such points he held all insurrections and rebellions in abhorrence —being true heart of oak he could not do otherwise—and therefore when Sir Hamon, of the Holy Cross, told how William Walworth, the mayor, not being able to tolerate the indignity shown to the king in Smithfield, 'drew his bavelard and grievously wounded Wat in the necke, and gave him a great blow on the head,' he was highly satisfied, and thought the conduct of the mayor such as befitted his place and station as the chief officer of the chief city in the land. 'For his part,' he said, 'he would have given the best bough of his body for a quarter-staff to have felled him to the ground!' But as in Wat Tyler's, so in Jack Cade's, insurrections—

> The adage must be verified
> That beggars, mounted, run their horse to death.

Richard II.'s early marriage, at the age of sixteen, with Anne of Bohemia, or, as she was called, 'the good Queen Anne,' may be mentioned here, as her name is connected with St. Alkmund's—that woman of heart who, for three livelong hours on her knees interceded with the Duke of Gloucester for the life of that good old man Sir Simon Burleigh—miscalled by Stow 'an intolerable, proud man, and a great oppressor of the poor.' This, however, refers to a later year (A.D. 1388) and to the days of '*The Merciless Parliament*,' or the parliament that wrought wonders.

The historians of Shrewsbury are my authority for the above statement.

'Richard II., in the twelfth year of his reign, May 28, granted, for the sum of 10*l.*, a licence to Thomas Pride, of this town, William Bishop, William Butfield, and William Mason, chaplains, to settle eight messuages in Salop and its suburbs upon two chaplains, "who shall celebrate daily in the church or chapel of St. Alkmund, for our good estate, and that of *Anne, our dearest consort*, while we live, and of the said Pride, &c. and for our and their souls when we shall depart this life."' What these messuages were is not known, but it is added: 'The parish of St. Alkmund comprises only a small portion of the town, but contains several insulated portions,

as the western half of the Castle Foregate, Hencot, Abright-Lee, part of Harlescott, Dinthill, and Preston Montford.'

The old town was visited by the same monarch in the year 1387, but with no Knights of the Bath. My Talking Friend very well remembered his time-honoured father speaking of this visit, as the Welshmen that passed and repassed made much of it, as he was on his way to the Marches of Wales, and in a friendly spirit. It appears that he came to Shrewsbury from Coventry with the chief justice, Sir Robert Tresillian, who, with other judges, had pronounced the commission of regency to be illegal. No doubt Tresillian was an over-staunch advocate of the king's prerogative, but he was a great man and a loyal. The writer in the 'Mirror for Magistrates'—George Ferrers—is not favourable to his memory. 'Baldwine to the reader' is made to say: 'Omitting the ruffle made by *Jack Strawe* and his meiny, I will take upon me the miserable person of Sir Robert Tresillian, chiefe justice of England, and of other which suffered with him, thereby to warn all of his authority, and profession to take heede of wrong judgements, misconstruing of lawes, or wresting of the same to serve the prince's turnes.' This is illustrated in the thirteenth and fourteenth stanzas thus :—

> The lawes we did interprete and statutes of the lande,
> Not truely by the texte, but newly by a glose ;
> And wordes that were most playne, when they by us were skand,
> We turned by construction to a Welshman's hose,
> Whereby many a one both life and land did lose :
> Yet this we made our meanes to mount aloft on mules,
> And serving times and turnes perverted lawes and rules.
>
> Thus climbing and contending alway to the toppe,
> From hie unto higher, and then to be most hye,
> The honey-dew of fortunes so fast on us did droppe
> That of King Richardes counsayle we came to be most nye,
> Whose favour to attayne we were full frai and shye ;
> Alway to his profite where anything might sounde
> That way (all was it wrong) the lawes we did expounde.

My Talking Friend always said that his time-honoured father spoke of the present time as a most restless one in Shrewsbury, and that there was nothing but dissension within its walls. History tells us that endeavours were made to put

an end to this by a composition, 'indented and made on Monday after the Assumption of the Virgin, 13 Richard II. (August 15, 1389), and confirmed by Inspeximus of his twenty-second year.' The reader who will turn to the historians of Shrewsbury will there find a remarkable and well-known portrait of this monarch, taken from the initial letter of this Inspeximus. On looking at it Gray's lines will again suggest themselves :—

> Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
> While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
> In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
> Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm ;
> Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
> That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

The advance in architecture at this time, and the improvements at the abbey, have been spoken of before, and the priest that was at Hanwood frequently alluded to it. 'On one occasion,' said my Talking Friend, 'he and the priest of Pontesbury returned full of the subject, having met in the abbey parlour Maister Thomas Rudburn, who was afterwards dean of St. Mary's, warden of Merton, chancellor of the University of Oxford, and, finally, bishop of St. David's—a very learned man, and fond of conveying information to others.'

The cause of the great excitement in the minds of these two worthy men was a conversation in the well-known parlour about William of Wykeham.

We need not here enter upon the history of a name so well known ; it is only mentioned because my Talking Friend liked to refer to it. His beautiful college in Oxford, to which Maister Thomas Rudburn referred with such delight, was finished in 1386. It was not enough to be the architect of Windesore, with this motto, 'This made Wickham!' something more was wanting ; and his college supplied that want. And the new inscription, or 'epitaphy,' as Hawes might have called it, 'This Wickham made!' was no empty boast. It was after 'this orchard for grown trees' (to use old Fuller's words) that he set about his 'nursery for grafts' at Winchester, and they both still attest the sacrifice of self in this great and good man.

Soon after this many conversations took place in the abbey parlour relating to new names which arose in the Church. The name 'Lollard' was most in vogue, and it was coupled, correctly or not, with a name that has never since been forgotten in England—that of the celebrated John Wiclif. Long ago the opinions of the Lollards and those of Wiclif had made a commotion in London and with the episcopate, but it was not till toward the end of Richard II.'s time that these matters were so much mooted in the country, and so in the abbot's parlour at Shrewsbury. The abbot, of course, sided with his party, but the priest of Hanwood, said my Talking Friend, was in many ways in advance of his neighbours, and he viewed the rise of Wiclif, and the greater spread of evangelical truth, with a satisfaction the most unfeigned, which, but for his known high character and goodness of heart, must have injured him with his superiors. It did not, however; and the Statute of Præmunire, which was shortly after passed, and which clipped the wings of Peter's patrimony in England, so 'mauled,' as Fuller expresses it, 'the papal power' that it was a blow from which the Church of Rome never recovered.

'Somewhere about this time my time-honoured father,' said my Talking Friend, 'used to speak of a great alarm received by the priest of Hanwood, which resulted in a very serious illness, owing to a cold he took on the occasion, and of which, at the time, he thought little, having so many other things to think about.

'It was about the middle of the year 1393 that this worthy man one night happened to be on the Hanwood Banks, making his way home from Ford by what is now called Horton Lane, when all of a sudden, in the direction of Shrewsbury, such a lurid light, with tongues and beards of fire shooting out of it at intervals, attracted his notice, that he felt sure some heavy misfortune had befallen the place. His thoughts at once centred themselves on his friend the abbot, and the abbey, and the well-known parlour; and so, having first left word at his humble grange where he was going, he hurried off for the old town.

'Long before his arrival there it was clear to his observant

eye that there was a great conflagration, but, as he thought, not at the abbey. And so it turned out. Many of the buildings at this time—most, indeed—were of wood and thatch, and a large part of the town was in flames. But what grieved him most of all to see was the wooden steeple of St. Chad's burning like a beacon fire. It was quite clear to him that nothing could save it, and so it was. Within his hearing there was a crash and a pillar of fire, and the steeple was no more. The good old man remained on the spot as long as he thought he could be of any use, and then retired, as was his wont, to the abbey parlour. He was observed by those present to be fatigued and exhausted, but he rallied under the ready hospitality of the abbot, and returned home next day. Many a day, however, was it before he visited that parlour again—six months or more. Fever supervened on cold, and he was an invalid for long. It was a great satisfaction always to the time-honoured Oak to say how much he was missed by the people of the vale, and how they tried, by their small presents, to relieve his sickness and to comfort him.' And I bethought me how great the small acts of life become sometimes, and of the great beauty of those words in the Book of Genesis, '*Carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds.*'

The statement of the time-honoured Oak is historically correct, as the extracts following, from the 'History of Shrewsbury,' will avouch :—

'This fact is recited by King Richard II. in a writ of privy seal, bearing date at Haverford, Sept. 8, in the eighteenth year of his reign, 1394, whereby, in consideration of the damages and losses which his beloved lieges the bailiffs, good men, and commonalty of the said town have now lately (*jam tardè*) sustained by a sudden misadventure of fire, by which the Church of St. Chad and a great part of the town were burned, he grants to them for the increase of their state, and the amendment and repair of their town, freedom from their fee-farm for three years, and also remits to them what remains due to him on the two moieties of the tenths granted in the last parliament of Winton.'

Previous to this wooden structure—of the steeple at least—there was the early stone one of Saxon days. That now burnt dated probably from the time of Henry III., who made a grant to it; and, as is so often the case in modern times, the fire was occasioned by the carelessness of the plumbers. Even the very name John *Plomer* is significant. In the words of our historians, an inquisition of the year 1393 records that 'on Tuesday before the feast of Corpus Christi one John Plomer had the work, or, as we should now say, the job, of covering the Church of St. Cedde; and by the undue government of himself, not with his own will, but by negligence, because he kept his fire upon the church badly, the said church *was burned*. These words literally taken would import that the church was *entirely consumed*, but the undoubted existence of the greater portion of the ancient walls till its final destruction clearly prove, though it was reduced to a shell, yet that the injury extended over only the roof and tower.'

The fall of this noble old church will be alluded to under a later date.

After the murder of the Duke of Gloucester, the king's uncle, and the condemnation of the Earl of Arundel, the times were very restless and unquiet, and the unpopularity of Richard increased yet more and more, and the time of his deposition was drawing nearer. Even in the country, and in a district so much out of the common track as the lovely valley of the Rea, curses not loud but deep were uttered. And all this was increased by the adjournment of the parliament—called THE GREAT PARLIAMENT—from Westminster, where it had been convened, in September, to Shrewsbury. An old friend of the priests of Hanwood, who lived at Lilleshall Abbey, afterwards told him of the king's visit there, January 25. It was on the 27th, as some write, or, as others, on the 29th, of the same month that by this parliament all the Acts of that of 1388 were reversed, and liberal supplies granted to the king. It was, however, but a packed parliament after all, and the grants were not grants of a willing-hearted people. Albeit, as Stow reports, 'this year King Richard kept his Christmas at Lichfield, where he spent in the Christmas time 200 tunns of wine and 2,000 oxen with

their appurtenance, and then took his journey toward Shrewsbury, where the parliament, lately prorogued, begun again.' The historians of Shrewsbury state broadly that 'his view in calling this assembly was to establish his authority on the firmest basis; indeed, upon the ruin of his country's freedom. As he might expect to accomplish this unhallowed project with greater facility in a remote provincial town than in the metropolis of the kingdom, this was probably his true reason for that adjournment, though the ground actually stated was the peculiar affection which he entertained for the people of Shropshire. An apprehension of tumult among Arundel's tenantry in this county and the design of seizing his estates were likewise, it is probable, among the motives for making Shrewsbury the scene of that national assembly.'

One other matter only is there in this reign which my Talking Friend used to dwell upon with much excitement, and that was 'the marvellous strong theatre at Coventry for the combat,' as Stow calls it, between Henry of Lancaster and Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, against whom the former had brought serious charges in parliament, declaring that he had spoken many slanderous words in private against the king, as they rode between Brentford to London, and how the king intended, notwithstanding the apparent reconciliation and assurance of safety, to subvert and to destroy many of his nobility. All readers of Shakespeare will recollect the well known accusation scene between the two, and the concluding words of Richard:—

> We were not born to sue, but to command;
> Which since we cannot do to make you friends.
> Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,
> At Coventry upon St. Lambert's Day;
> There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
> The swelling difference of your settled hate.
> Since we cannot atone you we shall see
> Justice decide the victor's chivalry.

Coventry was at no great distance from the old town of Shrewsbury, and many a warrior from the county was present at Gosford Green—amongst others Hugh Edgely, of Longden, who reported what he saw to the priest of Pontesbury, of

which Longden is a chapel. He had never seen so grand a sight before, and expressed great disappointment at the sudden termination of the duel. He was near enough to hear the Duke of Surrey, as officiating earl marshal (Mowbray, as one of the combatants, of course, could not act as such), demand of the champions the cause of their arrival under arms; and, after the trumpets had sounded, and the combatants had set forward, he saw the king throw his 'warder' down, and actually heard the sound of the truncheon as it struck the ground. Doubts are even yet entertained as to why the marvellous combat was so suddenly brought to an end, but it seems to have been by the advice and authority of the parliamentary commissioners, and for the reason put into the mouth of Richard by our great dramatic poet—

> For that our kingdom's earth should not be soiled
> With that dear blood which it hath fostered,
> And for our eyes do hate the dire aspect
> Of civil wounds ploughed up with neighbour's swords.

The banishment of Henry of Lancaster—'Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby'—for 'twice five summers,' and of Norfolk for life, are matters of history.

'I was a fine, straight oakling,' said my Talking Friend, 'about this time, and I might have served for one of the three oaken sticks which your friend Müller, the son of your good old friend Peter Erasmus Müller, said the Lord of Brandenburg, in Saxony, demanded, amongst other things difficult to procure, of the murderous and rebellious butchers of Gerstungen, who discoursed sadly amongst themselves, saying, "Who ever heard of oak saplings growing to a man's height without a single knot on the stem?" I was not, perhaps, quite knotless then, or I should not have been so sturdy and knotty now; but I was a fair oakling in those days when the nation became disaffected against this lawful king; and certainly my time-honoured father was by no means pleased that the inhabitants of the old town should have sided with Henry of Lancaster when, after his landing at Ravenspur, in Yorkshire, and other cunning devices hit upon, he passed through Shrewsbury on his way into Wales

to circumvent the king. Of his deposition and of the rise of the son of Bolingbroke every English reader knows from Shakespeare, and, perhaps, for very pity's sake, will take the side of Richard and his woeful pageant.

But then comes the question, Was he so reckless as he is painted?

Hume, I think, sums up his character very fairly, still pointing to the fact that they of the time who wrote of him were of the Lancastrian party; so that we are not to give entire credit to the reproaches they have cast upon his memory. Weak, however, he was, and unfit for government, 'less for want of natural parts and capacity than of solid judgment and a good education. He was violent in his temper, profuse in his expense, fond of idle show and magnificence, devoted to favourites, and addicted to pleasure.'

It is a matter much to be observed that the literature of the day was now greatly on the increase; for, to say nothing of such lights as Occleve, Gower, and Chaucer, who contributed vastly to the improvement of the English tongue, Wiclif's labours on the Bible, to which it would be superfluous to advert at length, but of which something will be said by-and-by, the labours of John de Trevisa, who died in the year 1395, ought not to be passed by.

'He was extracted' (I use the words of Collier) 'from an ancient and considerable family in Cornwall, was bred to learning, entered into priests' orders, and was vicar of Berkeley.' 'Most readers know him only as the translator of the "Polycronycon," but his masterpiece,' says old Fuller, 'was the translating of the Old and New Testament, justifying his act therein by the example of Bede, who turned the gospel of St. John into English.'

Wiclif died at the celebration of mass at Lutterworth, December 29, 1384, so that Trevisa's death is nearly eleven years after. It is not known whether any copy of his translation is in existence; but this is clear enough, that the Bible was emerging into light, and the people, by God's blessing, were soon about to rejoice in that light, notwithstanding the darkness which abided for many and long a year. 'I know not,' continues Fuller, 'which more to admire—his ability

that he could, his courage that he durst, or his industry that he did perform so difficult and dangerous a task, having no other commission than the command of his patron, Thomas, Lord Berkeley, which lord, as the said Trevysa observeth, had the Apocalypse in Latin and French (then generally understood by the better sort, as well as English) written on the roof and walls of his chapel at Berkeley, and which not long since (viz. *anno* 1622) remained, or not much defaced. Whereby we may observe that, midnight being past, some early risers began to strike fire and enlighten themselves from the Scriptures.'

Such was the state of things at the end of Richard II.'s reign. 'And I frequently heard my time-honoured father observe,' said my Talking Friend, 'that a desire for information was spreading even in the valley of the Rea, and that the priest of Hanwood who was in those days was one of all others to encourage it.' Amongst other things he had a curious method of teaching the boys and girls to write, which was highly satisfactory to the aged Oak, who could very well recollect the quaint figures children used to shape on the inner bark of the birch—much like the writing of Indian children on the palmetto leaves, referred to by Lady Cowper in her 'Diary.' As far as I could make out, this writing was upon smooth or other slate stone from Ponsert Hill. Possibly it might have been on real slate from Wales, but the quarries there were not opened at so early a date as the time of Richard II.'s reign.

And in making this passing remark on the people's learning to write, the general reader should bear in mind that even yet writing was far from being a common accomplishment. It was the *clerici*, or *clerks*, who wrote; *lay* and *borel* men, for the most part, did not. The little writing they wanted was done for them. During the crusades, it is true, there was much communication with the people from beyond sea; but it was chiefly by word of mouth, and the palmers were the messengers. The readers of our early history, and of the ballad lore collected from it, will readily call to mind many instances. Shrewsbury Abbey and Wenlock Abbey were places of great resort on such matters, and the *scrip-*

toria in both places contained all the news of the day. Manuscripts, of course, were completed there; but there, too, was stowed away many a story of love and constancy.

It may likewise be noted in this part of our narrative that deeds were not commonly sealed till the times of Edward III. and Richard II., though, as old Lambarde says, in his 'Perambulation of Kent,' 'the many-tooth and the short blackhandled knife like unto an old halfpenny whistle, instead of a seal, were rather the devices and pleasures of singular persons' to be found in every age.

The curious reader will not forget the words of Verstegan, which are to be found in his 'Restitution of Decayed Intelligence':—

'GEWANG, *the cheek or wang*; the side teeth are called wang teeth. Before the use of seales was in England divers writings had the wax of them bitten with the wang tooth of him that passed them, which was also therein mentioned in rhyme; as thus:—

> In witnesse of the sothe,
> Ich han bitten this waxe with my wang tothe.'

And thus I pass on from the time of the second Richard concluding with those stanzas of Daniel—the well-languaged Daniel—who wrote the 'History of the Civil War' in verse, as well as that from the Conquest to the end of Edward III. in prose.

> And sure this murdered prince, though weak he was,
> He was not ill, nor yet so weak, but that
> He shewed much martial valour in his place,
> Adventuring oft his person for the State;
> And might amongst our better princes pass
> Had not the flattery, rapine, and debate
> Of factious lords and greedy officers
> Disgraced his actions and abused his years.
>
> Nor is it so much princes' weaknesses,
> As the corruptions of their ministers,
> Whereby the commonwealth receives distress;
> For they, attending their particulars,
> Make imperfections their advantages
> To be themselves both kings and counsellors.
> And sure this commonwealth can never take
> Hurt by weak kings, but such as we do make.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Sufficiat nobis memorata credulitas.—S. HIERON. *Ad Damasum*, Epist. XV. tom. i. 39, D.

Sub Jove duravit multis immota diebus,
Et lunæ patiens, et pluvialis aquæ.
OVID, *Fast.* iv. 505.

I'll give you a simile: Did you ever see a well with two buckets? whilst one comes up full to be emptied, another goes down empty to be filled. Such is the state of all humanity.—WEBSTER, *The Malcontent*, vol. iv. 83. Dyce.

Certainly it will be found much better for men to guide themselves by such observations as their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather might have delivered to them than by those vulgar rules and examples which cannot in all points so exactly agree unto them.—LORD HERBERT of Cherbury, *Autobiography*, p. 1.

Whilom in the winter's rage
A palmer old and full of age
Sat and thought upon his youth
With eye's tear and heart's ruth,
Being all with cares y-blent,
While he thought of years misspent.
GREENE'S *Penitent Palmer's Ode*, vol. ii. 255. Dyce.

SPENCE, on the American union, quotes the words which follow as Dr. Channing's: 'Noble growths are slow. The growth of the poplar is rapid when compared with that of the oak, but we know that its value is proportionally small. There is always a ratio between growth and durability, and a law exists that whatever grows with great rapidity will rapidly decay. There is also a natural rate of growth, and one that may be stimulated; and all experience teaches us that the natural rate will prove the better in the end.'

In such sentiments as these none would have acquiesced more readily than the venerable Oak by the Rea side, who had listed to the gale as it rose and came on fitfully from the Habberley Hole, as well as to the gentle murmurings of that

well-loved stream, for so many eventful centuries. Himself firm-rooted and little moved, when all else was in motion, save the great I AM—THE ANCIENT OF DAYS—the everlasting NOW—the '*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*'—for He alone changeth not :—

True to Himself, God changes never ;
Wise, mighty, merciful for ever.

In fact, as my Talking Friend said, 'the time was now come when my venerable father was no longer able to shoot forth his vigorous branches ; and as for the midsummer shoot, the glory of an oak and the beauty of the country, that, too, was beyond the powers of the latent sap. Age had all but dried up the radical moisture, to say nothing of the very damp spot in which he stood, and of which he imbibed over large potations for a steady-going, deep-rooted tree.'

And when I heard my Talking Friend's observations I bethought me how Lorenzo de Medicis said long after, and how an old dramatist caught up his words, 'There's a spring at Michaelmas, but 'tis but a faint one.' So was it with this fine old tree. And then when I heard of his reminiscences and of his kindly advice, something of which will be set down in the present chapter, the feeling lines of Sir Alexander Boswell would run hurry-scurry through my brain, like the incoming tide into some narrow-mouthed cave :—

The auld will speak, the young maun hear,
Be canty, but be good and leal ;
Your ain ills aye hae heart to bear,
Anither's, aye, hae heart to feel ;
So ere I sett I'll see you shine,
I'll see you triumph ere I fa',
My parting breath shall boast you mine :
Good night ! and joy be wi' you a' !

The chief points this grand old tree studied to impress upon my Talking Friend, his son, were religion and piety, concord and unity, which would ensure loyalty to the throne. He always spoke of the oak as the MONARCH of the forest, and it had been impressed upon him, even from his earliest years, that a limited monarchy like ours was the blessing of

the land; whereas an unlimited despotism, which trod upon the liberties of the people, was sure to end in rebellion, blood, and anarchy. Shortly within the time of which we are writing, 'the rose of snow with her blushing foe' bore testimony to the soundness of his remarks, and after years only endorsed them. The people bear long and are patient, but at last they awake from their restless sleep. To use the words of Lord Brooke, that profoundly deep thinker, in his 'Treatise of Monarchie':—

> But grant the world slept in her misery,
> Yet greedy time, that good and ill devours,
> To cross this headlong course of tyranny
> Takes from the throne those ancient daring pow'rs,
> And by succession of man's discontent
> Carries mischance upon misgovernment.
>
> Wherein observe the wit of former days,
> Which feign'd the gods themselves (oft to prevent
> Power's inclination to oppressing ways)
> Came down and gave offences punishment,
> Lest men should think above mortality,
> Against injustice there was no decree.

But then, again, there was nothing to which the time-honoured Oak was so altogether opposed as to a wild democracy; and he counselled his son, my Talking Friend, to give at any time the best boughs he had to defend the throne. 'The ash,' he would add humorously, 'may make a tougher quarter-staff, but it is the oak that supplies the best truncheon and the best warder, fit for the hands of kings.' It was his constant and well-confirmed opinion that the people, under a democracy of their own choice, were the chiefest sufferers. Again Lord Brooke's thoughts were his:—

> Besides, this equal stiled democracy
> Lets fall men's minds, and makes their manners base.
> Learning and all arts of civility,
> Which add both unto nature and to place,
> It doth eclipse, as death to that estate,
> Wherein not worth, but idle wealth gives fate.
>
> Nay, when religion, God, and humane laws
> No other use or honour can expect
> Than to serve idle libertie's applause,
> As painted toys which multitudes affect,
> Who, judging all things while they nothing know,
> Lawless and godless are, and would live so.

And, lest this should appear to be an extreme case—the character of what St. Jerome would have called '*nescio quis de trivio, de compitis, de plateis, circumforaneus*'—

> Since as those persons usually do haunt
> The market-places which at home have least—

he adds in the last section of this celebrated but now little-known treatise:—

> So when men fall away from monarchy,
> Whether it be to states of few or more,
> Change leads them nearer unto anarchy
> By divers minutes than they were before;
> Since unity divided into many
> Begets confusion, never friend, to any.
>
> For in each kind of humane government,
> Where customs, laws, or ancient constitutions
> Serve as true scales to weigh out power's intent,
> Honour and wealth find there no diminutions.
> But where will reigns, and overleaps those bounds,
> What can establish but that which confounds?

'Amongst other things,' said my Talking Friend, 'which my time-honoured father endeavoured to instil into me was this—contentment with the existing state of things. "You will find," he would add, "a great majority always ready to complain, and to say that '*whatever is, is wrong.*' So do not you, but, whenever you can fairly and honestly, maintain the contrary principle that '*whatever is, is right.*'" My old adviser, that good priest of Hanwood at the sound of whose harp the quick-sighted fishes were moved—for fishes are not altogether deaf, though dumb—asserted manfully that this was an axiom in true divinity, and that in worldly matters also it approximated to the truth; and he was the last man living to bar improvement. Was he not the first—much as he disapproved of the disturbances of the Lollards (like to those of the Anabaptists of a later day)—to declare the good intents of Wiclif, and to argue in the abbey parlour that whosoever brought down the Scriptures to the intelligence of the people was a public benefactor? Did not many look narrowly upon him for his resolutely defending his position? Did not even his friend the abbot say he must be

cautious, or he might bring in confusion and every evil work? His views in the end,' said my Talking Friend, 'were correct ones; and I, who lived to see the invention of printing, the Reformation, and its results, know it full well. Other priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury—many—have said the same thing beneath these old storm-tossed boughs of mine, and having lived to teach this truth faithfully to the people, they died in it as faithfully, and were buried by the Rea side, in one churchyard or another (for both are within the sound of its musical shallows), though there is no tombstone to mark the place which knows them no more. Tombstones, indeed, tell truth but for a very few years—some forty, more or less, in a great cemetery—and then they sink into the ground, like the bodies of the dead, or are removed from their place. True it is ancestral tombstones may remain, but the graves of the people are as little remembered as themselves. A little while, comparatively, and they, too, are not. To tell the truth,' concluded my Talking Friend, 'my father outlived all the tombstones of the neighbourhood, and I have outlived most of the later ones. Our gnarled trunks are more defiant of the teeth of time.'

And I bethought me of Juvenal's lines; for how evanescent is

> Laudis titulique cupido
> Hæsuri saxis cinerum custodibus; ad quæ
> Discutienda valent sterilis mala robora ficûs,
> *Quandoquidem data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulcris.*

'In my oakling days,' said my Talking Friend to me one day, 'I had an unbounded curiosity. I wanted to know this and I wanted to know that; in fact, I wanted to know a great deal more than my time-honoured father chose to tell me; indeed, I began to think his views very contracted, and that the ash, and the elm, and the little poplar knew as much as he did. But I lived long enough to know how well informed he was; and at the present moment, when ironclads are superseding heart of oak, I am clean and quite and altogether convinced that there are many things about which it is better we should be ignorant. My aged father would have grown melancholy had an inkling of such a thing crossed him.'

It struck me as a curious train of thought; at the same time there was always a vein of humour in my friend's conversation, and I was not much surprised. It set me, nevertheless, a-thinking, and calling to mind the errors of my youth, I said mentally, 'How many times do we all want to know too much! How beautiful are the words in which the godlike angel so mildly answered Adam!' And I repeated them to myself:—

> This also thy request, with caution ask'd,
> Obtain; though to recount almighty works
> What words or tongue of seraph can suffice,
> Or heart of man suffice to comprehend?
> Yet what thou canst attain, which best may serve
> To glorify the Maker, and infer
> Thee also happier, shall not be withheld
> Thy hearing; such commission from above
> I have receiv'd, to answer thy desire
> Of knowledge within bounds; beyond, abstain
> To ask; nor let thine own inventions hope
> Things not reveal'd, which th' invisible King,
> Only omniscient, hath suppress'd in night,
> To none communicable in earth or heaven:
> Enough is left besides to search and know.
> But knowledge is as food, and needs no less
> Her temperance over appetite, to know
> In measure what the mind may well contain;
> Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
> Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.

'One day,' my Talking Friend said, without anything leading to it, 'the priest of Hanwood and his friend Thomas Silverton, of Moreton Corbet, spent the better part of a summer's day beneath my aged father's shade; and I have great cause to recollect the circumstance because much of their conversation turned on local history—of the misfortunes of Hunrit and his brother Uluiet—whatever they were—and how they told of old Toret, saying much of Moreton Toret, that very ancient demesne which you now call Moreton Corbet; for nothing that Toret held at or before "Domesday" can be proved to have remained in his family or to have descended to his heirs, the Corbets of Moreton.'

This again most unexpectedly gave a date, for it appears that Thomas Silverton, priest of Moreton Corbet, resigned in

1382, and was succeeded by Henry d'Aderley. Thus was the time-honoured tree enabled to afford shade to the wayfarer even so late as this, though, as I hinted, his years were declining, and he might have said with Shakespeare—

> My way of life
> Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf.

The great fire at Shrewsbury, which did so much damage, and consumed St. Chad's wooden steeple, has been previously referred to. This also the time-honoured tree recollected, for he spoke of the priest of Hanwood's great feeling on that occasion, and how, out of his small pittance, he contrived to relieve many poor and necessitous people. This was in 1394. Great was the delight this noble tree had in recording the praises of a good man's life. How he would have liked such lines as these! for he had learnt in his old age that, though he was not, '*goodness is immortal.*'

> Servant of God, well done! They serve God well
> Who serve His creatures. When the funeral bell
> Tolls for the dead there's nothing left of all
> That decks the 'scutcheon and the velvet pall
> Save this: the coronet is empty show,
> The strength and loveliness are hid below,
> The shifting wealth to others hath accrued,
> And learning cheers not the grave's solitude.
> What's DONE is what remains! Ah! blessed they
> Who have completed tasks of love to stay
> And answer mutely for them, being dead,
> Life was not purposeless, though life be fled.

But, passing by the Old Oak's age, I will call to mind some more of his remarks and reminiscences, coupled together with his sage advice.

The wooded state of the country has been often alluded to in these pages, and it is altogether corroborated by a remark which the time-honoured tree made to his son many years past. I had called my Talking Friend's attention to a beautiful little squirrel which I had observed passing and repassing from pine to pine in the Last of the Old Squire's grounds, repeating his journey backwards and forwards with his little store as many as sixteen times in the hour.

'My aged father,' said my Talking Friend to me on this

occasion, 'recollected well the time when a squirrel could come direct from the Monterley Woods to Hanwood without alighting on the ground, but springing from branch to branch.' And he added, when speaking on the subject, 'Never hurt the little squirrel, for he carries off many more acorns than he ever eats, and they are sure, some of them, to sprout and grow.'

And it was a pretty saying of this old tree, to whom one might have applied the words of Shakespeare's sonnet at this time :—

> My glass shows me myself indeed,
> Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity.

Even in later times, and till the days of the Hanoverian Succession, there was a vast portion of this valley of the Rea uncultivated. Much of it, indeed, required great labour and care to bring it into a fruitful state; but it was, with those hardy tenants, of no ungenial soil after all, as with those the old dramatist wrote of :—

> The thrifty husbandmen are never wont,
> That see their lands unfruitful, to forsake them ;
> But when the mould is barren and unapt
> They toil, they plough, to make the fallow fat.
> The pilot in the dangerous seas is known,
> In calmer waves the silly sailor strives.

Without turning over the page I alighted upon this old and favourite adage, which appears to have come down from Saxon times, and is illustrative of this *Inwit* :—

> Men seek not moss upon a rolling stone ;

a short sentence, as Cervantes might have said, drawn from long experience. And when I alighted upon it I called to mind how my Talking Friend had told me more than once the great delight which his aged father always took in the proverbs of the people, and how he always said that although there might be an occasion of 'vulgar error' in their application, he could never be a wise man who ran counter to them. One thing was certain, 'They contained the common sense of the common people.'

And in what he said no doubt the Old Oak was very wise; nor were his sentiments any contradiction at all to the

words of Aristotle in his 'Treatise on Rhetoric,' who tells us, Οἱ ἄγροικοι μάλιστα γνωμοτύποι εἰσὶ, καὶ ῥαδίως ἀποφαίνονται, for the passage in full stands thus: 'The employment of maxims becomes him who is rather advanced in life, and particularly as respects subjects about which each happens to be well informed; since for one not so advanced in age to sport maxims is bad taste, just as it is for him to have recourse to fables; and the use of them on subjects about which one is ignorant is silly, and argues a want of education. There is a sufficient sign of this, for the boors of the country are, of all other people, most fond of stammering out maxims, and set them forth with great volubility.' So translates clever old Hobbes. A maxim stammered out by a boor for the nonce will usually contain a fallacy, but the old-established maxims of the country people in any country are tell-truths for ages.

One day, when we had been speaking of the Lollards and of the abuses of some of the miscalled followers of the single-hearted Wiclif, my Talking Friend told me that towards the end of Richard II.'s days, or early in Henry IV.'s, the good priest of Hanwood took a great interest in a poor youth from Melverley, a low, marshy, and unhealthy spot, where—when the Vyrnwy and Severn were flooded—hares were said to sit on the gates. This poor youth, by name Edwin Elser, in some way connected with the priest family at Llandrinio, his friend the priest of Hanwood, through the interest of the abbot of Shrewsbury, had contrived to get entered as a 'poor scholar' in Oxford; but the difficulty was to provide the small ways and means for a continuance. This, however, he contrived to do, and the sickly youth was pushed forward, and so prospered in life. One of all others was this good man to have read with experimental knowledge those feeling lines of the amiable Keble in his 'Visitation and Communion of the Sick':—

O youth and joy, your airy tread
Too lightly springs by Sorrow's bed,
Your keen eye glances are too bright,
Too restless for a sick man's sight.
Farewell! for one short life we part:
I rather woo the soothing art,
Which only souls in suffering tried
Bear to their suffering brethren's side.

In his fifth sermon before King Edward VI. honest old Latimer makes an appeal for the relief of 'poor scholars,' such as the sickly youth, whose advance in life was furthered by the good priest of Hanwood, and would have that spent on them which was sometimes spent 'in pilgrimage matters, in trentals, in masses, in pardons, in purgatory matters,' and he adds, 'There be none now but great men's sons in colleges, and their fathers look not to have them preachers; so every way this office of preaching is pinched at.' Again, in the sixth sermon, he speaks of 'great men and esquires who send their sons there, and put out poor scholars that should be divines,' adding that this sort of people 'intend not that their sons should be preachers, but that they may have a show of learning,' in all of which he declares the devil has a great hand.

All who have read the beautiful 'Lives' of Izaak Walton—look, reader, to that beautiful sonnet of Wordsworth's in which he speaks of 'meek Walton's heavenly memory'—will not fail to recollect the kindness of the good Bishop Jewel, of Salisbury, to the poor scholar Richard Hooker, a name never to be forgotten as long as the English language shall last, and the Church established in these realms remain; for who so thorough a defender of its golden mean as he? What a pretty story is that of the walking-staff which Jewel lent to the youthful Hooker! and how simply beautiful the end of that excellent prelate!

The lines which follow are said to be inscribed on the tomb of Richard Carew, of Anthony, Cornwall, having been composed by himself immediately before his death. Such would have been the holy meditations of a prelate like Jewel:—

> My time uncertain, Lord, long certain cannot be,
> What's best to me's unknown, and only known to Thee.
> Oh! by repentance and amendment grant that I
> May still live in Thy fear, and in Thy favour die.

The underwritten remarks, extracted from Wright's 'History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England during the Middle Ages,' are not unconnected with what has been said on the subject of poor scholars, and I transcribe it

after having heard my Talking Friend remark that he had seen the advantage of such consideration in the bringing forward of a scholar like the late orientalist, Professor Lee, by good old Jonathan Scott, the translator of Bahar Danush and secretary to Warren Hastings, whom I very well recollect in company with my maternal grandfather, Colonel Wood, and that kind-hearted man, Archdeacon Corbet, and others. 'Did not I often see him,' continued the fine old tree, 'with his carpenter's basket slung over his stalwart shoulder; and did not I hear, from this very spot, that wonderful peal which he and his fellows rang out on the bells of St. Chad's—I cannot say how many years ago?' And the leaves of the old tree trembled with delight, such influence had kindness on his heart of oak.

But to transcribe the remarks above alluded to.

'It was long before the people of the middle ages could be persuaded that literary education was of any use at all, except for those who were to be made great scholars. The clergy itself, unfortunately, did not see the necessity of popular education; and, although the schools in parish churches were long continued, they appear to have been conducted more and more with negligence. It was the mercantile class in the towns which made the first step in advance by the establishment of those foundations which have continued till the present time under the name of grammar schools. These schools are traced back to the thirteenth century, when the merchant guilds, by whom they were founded, began to assume a greater degree of importance; and they were usually intended for the general benefit of the town, but were combined with an ecclesiastical establishment for performing services for the souls of the members of the guild, in consequence of which, at the Reformation, they became involved in the superstitious uses, and were dissolved and refounded in the reign of Edward VI., so that they are now generally called King Edward's foundations. The great object of these schools was to give the instruction necessary for admission to the universities, and they were in some degree the answer to an appeal which came deeply from the mass of the people; for there was at that time a

great spontaneous eagerness for learning, both for the sake of learning itself and because it was a road to high distinction. It was a very common practice for poor youths to go about the country during vacation time to beg money to help them at school during term. In "Piers Ploughman" among the objects of legitimate charity the writer enumerates money given to

> Sette scolers to scole,
> Or to some othere craftes;

and in the popular complaints of the burden of taxation, involuntary and voluntary, the alms given to poor scholars are often enumerated.'

There was no place of education at Shrewsbury like the present eminent free schools (which will be referred to hereafter) so early as the date of Richard II. or Henry IV.; but there were plenty of poor scholars, like Edwin Elser, who needed the assistance of good men like the priest of Hanwood, the Old Oak's friend, and who happily found it. The dead palsy of covetousness never crippled his hand. It was not much of his own he had to give, but what he had, of that he gave willingly, encouraging others to a like liberality whose wordly means were more competent to aid and assist in such good works as showed a living faith. Good, simple, earnest man, happy indweller of a happy valley by the Rea side—

> He was too good to be
> Where ill men were, and was the best of all
> Amongst the rar'st of good ones.

Up to this time, and for many years later, the state of tillage and agriculture in these parts was very low. Clearances, as was stated in an earlier chapter, were made here and there, and each subsequent owner kept increasing what his predecessor began; but with comparatively more modern days the wheat, rye, barley, and oats grown were almost nothing—peas and beans were much the larger crop. For feeding of their swine, which composed the greater part of what we should now call *stock*, they depended almost entirely upon beech and oak mast. The truth is that timber at this time was not of any great value, 'but principally on account

of the acorns and beech mast, which, when the country was in a very imperfect state of cultivation, had a degree of importance of which we can form a very inadequate idea at this time.' So says Mr. Nichols, as quoted by Ellis in his 'General Introduction to Domesday,' who adds that '*pannagium*, or pannage, had a double acceptation in the survey. It meant, first, the running and feeding of hogs in the woods, and, in a secondary sense, the price or rate of their running. In one or two entries it is termed *pastio*.' Whenever a clearance was made the Normans gave it the name of '*essarts*,' in which, says the same authority, 'we have probably the earliest notices of increasing cultivation, essarts being a forest phrase for a cultivated spot, from the French *assartir*, to make plain.'

Of the four principal descriptions of land mentioned in 'Domesday'—*terra*, *silva*, *pastura*, and *pratum*—it is probable that the meadow land on the sides of the Rea Brook would come under the latter. '*Terra*, put simply, uniformly signifies arable land, as distinct from wood, meadow, and common pasture.' *Herbagium* and *marese*, *merse*, *mora*, or marsh, speak for themselves.

Nothing was so uncertain at this time as inland commerce. On one occasion the time-honoured Old Oak said that at Meole they hardly knew the price of corn at Shrewsbury. In these parts the chief staples for corn were all upon the Severn —such as Worcester and Gloucester. As a proof of the truth of what the Old Oak said there is historical evidence to show that in the year 1258 a quarter of wheat cost 20*s*. at Northampton, when it sold for 8*s*. at Dunstable ; and no doubt the discrepancy in other places was equally great.

No doubt, also, commercial intercourse was a good deal impeded by the heavy tolls and imposts exacted almost universally throughout the country—not only by cities and the great towns, but by lordly barons and the high estates of the realm, to say nothing of the smaller tribute paid to owners of a less degree. '*Tol*, *thol*, *tholoneum*, in the language of "Domesday Survey,"' says the able authority above quoted, 'was not merely the liberty of buying and selling, and keeping a market, it also signified the customary dues or rents paid to

the lord of a manor for his profits of the fair or market, as well as a tribute or custom for passage.'

We have been centuries in getting rid of oppressive tolls, and they were necessary, it must be admitted, in the infancy of states. Our forefathers paid heavy tolls, as we pay heavy taxes, for the protection of their property. The decrease of imposts, like the taking off of taxes, implies national prosperity. Lord Brooke, in his section on 'Commerce,' has many hints on this head, in which he was beforehand with the time in which he lived. What he said of proud kings is applicable to the proud barons of former days, viz. that with curious prospect they

> Ought to survey the commerce of their land,
> New trades and staples still establishing,
> So to improve the work of every hand,
> As each may thrive, and, by exchange, the throne
> Grow rich indeed because not rich alone.

Commerce, however, generally, was not a matter which much concerned the time-honoured Oak by the wayside, though he listened always with great satisfaction to all which concerned the improvement of society. Quite alive was he to the boorish estate of the people in the valley of the Rea, and which, my Talking Friend said, remained till a very late date. For many and long a day, if the state of the labourer was low, it must be admitted that it was not much lower than that of his master. There is something pleasant in recalling an age when all fed at one board and all fared alike—early to bed and early to rise. But these were not days of social progress. If the master knew little, the servant must necessarily know less. There are parts of England into which the schoolmaster, in its extended sense, has hardly yet entered. What old Tusser says in his 'Introduction to the Book of Husbandry' applied to Elizabeth's days, but the pith and matter of it extends to far more recent ones :—

> Good husbandmen must moil and toil
> To try to live by labour'd field ;
> Their wives at home must keep such coil
> As their like acts may profit yield ;
> For well they know,
> As shaft from bow,
> Or chalk from snow,

A good round rent their lords they give,
And must keep touch in all they pay;
With credit crackt else for to live,
Or trust to legs and run away.

It may be added here that the Old Oak, counselled by his friend the priest of Hanwood, was far before the age in which he lived in the matter of open country and several, or, as we should now speak, of commons and enclosures. Though he loved the oak forests of the land—that of the Stiperstones especially—yet was he quite alive to the fact that increased cultivation and increased population must go together. Hence what was by the Normans called 'essarts' was no cause of disturbance to him; and when the old priest declared that much more wood wanted clearing, instancing particularly the hazel, the alder, and the ash plants, he acquiesced at once in the opinion. The mouths of the people were open, and open mouths must be filled with food. Nothing can be clearer than the fact that if enclosures had not been proceeded with we should at this time have been starved out of house and home. Nothing can be truer than that

In every rank, or great or small,
'Tis industry supports us all.

In the days we are now arrived at, though the people had increased, and, as the priest of Hanwood pointed out to the venerable tree, were increasing every year that came in, yet was the population of England and Wales but comparatively small; indeed, in the last year of Edward III.'s reign—that is, A.D. 1377—it was but 2,323,802 souls; little more than half that of London alone at the present day, when the increase of population throughout the land is put down as 4,000 per week!

In passing on from this subject, it is evident that honest old Latimer was not altogether alive to the necessity of enclosures to meet the strain of an increasing population. Is it quite evident that we are so now, and is there not still a great deal of land—down and other—that may be turned to profitable use? No doubt it will disfigure the picturesque—and none would miss the loss of beautiful scenery more than myself—but necessity knows no law: SALUS POPULI SUPREMA LEX.

I was still meditating on agricultural improvement when my Talking Friend interposed and said, 'My time-honoured father maintained a very curious opinion about fern, which had been instilled into him by the priest of Hanwood.'

On inquiry I found that this excellent man had been the means of bringing many plots of ground into cultivation, and he always said that fields where the fern grew thickest were neglected ones, and if only pared and burnt would produce the best wheat in the district. Thus he turned the line of Horace to account—

Neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris.

And it is a curious fact, more recently ascertained, that fern growth is the limit of wheat growth, or something very like it. It is well known that New Zealand is rich in every sort of fern, and, from the specimens sent to us, there is no doubt but that by-and-by it will be as rich in wheat. Mr. Heywood, in his 'Vacation Tour at the Antipodes,' tells us that he found at least five different kinds of fern on the slopes of the hills, and Mr. Samuel Butler, the grandson of dear old Bishop Butler, in his 'First Year in Canterbury Settlement,' gives a list of the English ferns found there, adding that 'we have a tree fern which grows as high as twenty feet.'

Evidently the priest of Hanwood thought, and impressed his thoughts upon the Old Oak by the Rea side, that within a period of years the whole valley would be under cultivation either as meadow or corn land; which has long ago come to pass, for his views were not

> Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
> The brain, new stuff'd in youth with triumphs gay
> Of old romance.

And as we press on each other's heels with a rapidly increasing population, only leaving room for ourselves by proportionate emigration, it is absolutely necessary to bring much wood and waste even yet under the scythe or the plough. At the same time, we need not run into extremes, and it is to be remembered that some heaths and wild forest land can never be brought under cultivation with profit. So, however, it is elsewhere as well as in England, and one-third

of the United States, it is stated on credible authority, is wholly unfit for the occupation of man.

Standing, as he did, not far from the banks of the Rea, the time-honoured Oak would constantly declare that its fish were not to be neglected. Nor indeed were they; for the stream was full of trouts and white fish, pikes and eels; and those who took to fishing took sufficient to keep themselves and their neighbours. For in those days barter, not money, was the usual manner of dealing, and so the inhabitants of the Rea side, all the way down from Marton Pool to Coleham, where it enters the Severn, dealt with one another trustily and pleasantly. Those early days were days of sincerity and truth. Indeed,

> To suspect a friend unworthily
> Instructs him the next way to suspect you,
> And prompts him to deceive you.

It should be observed, in speaking of fish, that from that time to this the white fish, or, as old John Diggory, a humourist on the Rea side, called them, *scaly ones*, were the best esteemed. But then it is to be recollected that, like the minnow and the gudgeon, roach and dace were the food of trout and pike. And I was struck with the contrast when I read that the creeks and harbours of Vancouver abound with all sorts of fish—four sorts of salmon even, all good except the hump-backed one—and with one sort of '*white fish*,' from two pounds to six pounds apiece, found also on the east side of the Rocky Mountains, and said to be '*the only description of fish of which the palate does not grow weary*.' But if the Rea had no salmon, it had trout which

> Shone like the moon in water seen by night;

and then for the flowers which fringed and enamelled its banks—primroses, cowslips, violets, oxlips, the wild hyacinth, and the harebell—

> The pearliest dew not brings
> Such morning incense from the fields of May.

But I am forgetting that the Rea is to me what the Mincio was to Virgil, and must pass on.

On one occasion, towards the end of the Wars of the

Roses, as my Talking Friend told me, he had been complaining to his time-honoured father of the miserable state of things when he replied curtly, 'Bad enough, by my troth; but unsettled times, like muddy waters, settle down, and a purifying process is still going on. Individuals suffer, and must suffer heavily, but the nation at large will see its way to true liberty through the mist of turbulence and confusion as they gather up and pass away. You are, comparatively speaking, but an oakling to me, and I have seen many changes, and it must be admitted that they have been altogether on the side of improvement.' So said my Talking Friend, and, adverting to his father's remarks, I called to mind a passage in the Dean of Chichester's 'Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury,' which I had recently been reading. 'In the study of history we turn to adore the providence of our God, when, in mercy, He frustrates the immediate designs of His short-sighted creatures. Still more do we admire the Divine benevolence when He blesses their well-intentioned exertions by shaping them to purposes more important and more really in accordance with their desires than they ventured to anticipate; when He makes their very failures to be stepping-stones for the advancement of generations yet unborn.' So to study history is to study it to good purpose. And such seems to have been the wisdom of this time-honoured tree that he could say—

> Lo, hasting to mine end,
> I find no time too late for to amend.

Long previous to this, on the coming in of the Normans, he had observed that the religious foundations they left behind them, such as the abbey at Shrewsbury, where the old priest of Hanwood always found a welcome so hearty, would bring about ultimately great good. The offering might be made, and probably was made, under fear and qualms of conscience; for blood poured out like water for rape, and for murder, and for untold violence; but, once erected, these houses must tend to humanise, and superstition would end in true religion and piety; and prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving would tend to stifle the cry of blood as it arose from

unhallowed ground. And thus the old tree by the Rea side was beforehand with the clever professor's remarks: 'Like the abbey which the victorious Norman raised to commemorate and sanctify the bloody day of Hastings, and the other foundations of remorseful superstition, they could not fail to be in some degree houses of mercy, and witnesses along the path of conquest and the power which is above the strong. The mere creation of architectural beauty destined for a religious purpose must always have had a humanising effect if it had no effect of a more deeply religious kind.' Experience has proved all this to be true.

One morning, when the subject of taxes was under discussion, my Talking Friend told me how his father recollected the time when every hive (skep, I think he called it) of bees paid a set of honey to the lord of the manor on the Rea side; in fact, there was hardly anything which did not pay tax to the manorial despot, oftentimes as imperious as the emperor of all the Russias. Every good woman of a household who brewed beer, and wove her own web, had to pay a fixed sum; and if beer was sold at the house, as was the custom from very early days, the man was fined if it was bad, and the woman was set in the ducking-stool. To which my Talking Friend added, with a pleasant shake of his leaves, 'What would John Altree or Dick Hayward think now if they had, besides their rent, to pay so much to the lord for their forge, and to furnish him with nails from the king's iron—that is to say, of the best—for his annual use? Easier by far is it to pay present taxes for protection than to be liable to unwonted demands.

'In these days,' continued my pleasant chronicler, 'you can marry whom you please, and, within the pale of the law, do what you please also. But my time honoured father well recollected the time at Shrewsbury when, if a widow married, she paid twenty pence to the king, and a maid tenpence; and sometimes he and the lord of the manor would interdict a marriage altogether if the connection seemed to be one which would strengthen an adversary's interests and impair their own. There was no doing what you pleased in those days.'

On asking him if he had ever heard his aged father speak

of the borough English, he replied that he had, but he did not seem at all to be aware of the modern fiction about the younger son's inheritance. And then, as if by accident—a neighbour had just lighted his cigar too near the barn—he mentioned how there was in Shrewsbury, in the Norman's days, a very good law, which, his time-honoured father said, had it been continued, would have saved many a good bit of heart of oak out of the forest of Lythewood. The law was this: 'If any burgess's house was burnt, either by negligence or by accident, he paid a forfeiture of forty shillings to the king and two shillings each to his two nearest neighbours.' The curious reader will find it recorded in 'Domesday,' together with a very similar account of the same custom at Chester, where, says Sir Henry Ellis, 'the laws, as they stood in the time of the Confessor, are enumerated at greater length than those in almost any other city; and they are as full upon the rights allowed to the earl as on those of the crown.' These and other like remarks and reminiscences, together with much good advice to his son, would the time-honoured tree throw out by the Rea side in sunnier days, when the ripple of the stream was soothing, and all the country around was beautiful and bright.

How quiet shows the woodland scene,
Each flower and tree, its duty done,
Reposing in decay serene,
Like weary men whose age is won.
Such calm old age as conscience pure
And self-commanding hearts ensure,
Waiting their summons to the sky,
Content to live, but not afraid to die.

But who has not found out for himself, to use the words of no mean writer, that 'many a defeat must be experienced, many a rebuff sustained, ere dependence on his own courage is rooted out of a brave man's heart, to be replaced by that nobler fortitude which relies solely on the will of Heaven? Yet a brave man is no bad material out of which to form a good one;' for, as he had said in a preceding page, 'the consciousness of coming danger, especially when it is of a kind with which habit has rendered him familiar, and which practice has taught him to baffle by his own skill and courage,

has a moral effect on a good man's character. It cheers his spirits and exalts his imagination, it sharpens his intellects, and, above all, it softens his heart.'

But it is not to be supposed that the grand old tree, any more than the men who sought rest and shade beneath his boughs, however oracular at times, was free from prejudice and imperfections. Had he been so, he would not have been an oak. The truth is that, like 'spirits not finely touched but to fine issues,' he, too, like these, was over firmly rooted in the earth not to partake of earthly particles. And thus, every now and then, when newly-introduced trees, such, for example, as the Lombardy and black Italian poplars, would be vaunting themselves and making noisy rustlings with their loosely hung leaves ; or when some plane tree, occidental or oriental, would make a show of its wide-spreading branches, he would compare their quivering and flickering shade with his own dark and almost impenetrable covert in the high noon of a hot July day, noting how the labouring and borrel man chose *his* protection, and not theirs. And not at all giving in to their beauty, in their own way, he was one to have said in his haste—

> Oh, if there be another world i' th' moon,
> As some fantastics dream, I could wish all men—
> The whole race of them—for their inconstancy
> Sent thither to people that !

I have omitted to remark earlier that the time-honoured Old Oak was ill satisfied, in the earlier days of the Normans, to see the number of castles they were in the habit of erecting. The quantities of oak consumed in the building of them —for no other timber was used—was immense. Those that came most within the venerable tree's notice were the castles of Shrewsbury, Caus, and Montgomery, all of which have been before alluded to. But besides these there were quantities of strongholds (*castella adulterina*, Matthew Paris called them) up and down the country, where each baron, and sometimes each lord of the manor, ensconced himself, doing what was right in his own eyes and setting everyone else at defiance. What Sir Henry Ellis says, under the head of 'Castles,' is no doubt very near the mark.

'Another point on which the "Domesday" survey throws considerable light is the history of our ancient castles. Castles, walled with stone and designed for residence as well as defence, are said by Grose to be, for the most part, of no higher antiquity than the Conquest. The Conqueror himself was sensible that want of fortified places had greatly facilitated his success. To remedy this defect, and to overawe his subjects, he erected numerous castles. Matthew Paris says: "Ad castra quoque construenda, rex antecessores suos omnes superabat." His reign was in fact a new era in the history of our castellated structures.' After having enumerated them, he adds, 'Of forty-nine castles here mentioned one only, Arundel, is noticed as existing in the time of Edward the Confessor. Eight are known, either on the authority of "Domesday" or our old historians, to have been built by the Conqueror himself. Ten are entered as erected by greater barons, and one by an under tenant to Earl Roger. Eleven more, of whose builders we have no particular account, are noticed in the survey, either expressly or by inference, as *new*. It is singular that the ruins which are now remaining of almost all these castles have preserved one feature of uniformity. They are each distinguished by a mount and keep, marking the peculiar style of architecture introduced into our castellated fortifications by the Normans at their first settlement. The castles of Dover, Nottingham, and Durham, known to have been built by the Conqueror, *with the White Tower* in the Tower of London, are unnoticed in the survey.'

But the great increase in these strongholds was between the time of the survey (as has been before alluded to) and the reign of Henry II. In the words of Matthew Paris, given in a note by the above great authority, '*Castella adulterina, quæ tempore regis (Henrici Secundi) à quocunque constructa sint, diruuntur, quorum numerus ad undecies centum et quindecim excrevit.*'

The drift and gist of all the Old Oak's remarks on the many castles throughout the land was simply this. Castellated structures implied little security, and with little security there is usually little liberty.

But it is time to close this chapter, and, passing by any further remarks which the old tree on the Rea side may have made on subjects relating to his times, I will quote a remark of Jerome's, which will refer either to myself or to anyone else who may seek shelter under my Talking Friend, who, though old, is not too old to afford a hospitable shade when the summer's sun shines gloriously. 'Felix, et omni dignus beatitudine, quem senectus Christo occupat servientem, quem extrema dies SALVATORI invenerit militantem.'

Some Anglo-Saxon of early date might have said, according to the simplicity of his own speech, and with no lack of faith—for he, like the elders of the Greek Church and St. Chrysostom, did not always mention the Saviour's name when nearest to his thoughts—

> Whoso doth all things well
> That here is to be done
> Shall never perish in this world,
> Nor in the world to come!

CHAPTER XXVII.

WICLIF.

Hæc nos præcipuè tam pia causa decet.
OVID, *Fast.* iii. 252.

Sæpius ingentes lux pellit parva tenebras,
Rivulus et dulces sæpe ministrat aquas.
S. ANSELM, *Carm. de Contemptu Mundi.*

The true worshippers of Christ have His protection guaranteed to them ; they are girt in with the measuring line of His omnipotent love.—Dr. CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH on Rev. xi. 1, 2.

It had been better for the Christian Church if that which calls itself *Catholic* had been less employed in creating pretended *faith*, and more employed in maintaining universal *charity*.—WHICHCOT'S *Aphorisms*, Cent. i. 68. Ed. 8vo. 1753.

Genuine piety is modest, private, and unaffected. Piety, when assumed as a mask to cover or to assist inordinate ambition, or connected with a disordered fancy, labours to be ostentatious, absurd, extravagant, and practically superstitious.—SHARON TURNER'S *Anglo-Saxons*, Book VI. ch. v. vol. ii. 247.

Ceu flamina prima
Cùm deprensa fremunt silvis, et cæca volutant
Murmura, venturos nautis prodentia ventos.
VIRGIL, *Æn.* x. 97, &c.

THE times of which we are yet treating were restless and uneasy ones, and the Wars of the Roses, which are a great part of them, left town and country disturbed. In one way or another, party was always coming into collision with party, and, as Daniel puts it in his 'Historical Poem on the Civil War'—

The bounds once over gone that hold men in,
They never stay, but on from bad to worse.
Wrongs do not leave off there where they begin,
But still beget new mischiefs in their course.

Such was the state of things which declared itself in con-

fusion and every evil work about the time when the Old Oak's days were drawing to a close; and from this point it is that my Talking Friend will take the pre-eminence, introducing, of course, his venerable father's experiences as they fit in and jump to his purpose.

Introductory to a conversation which about this time took place under his youthful and increasing shade, it may be noted here that after long corruption a reaction took place in the middle of Edward III.'s reign, when, it might be said, the struggle for the Reformation began. Good and holy and sanctified souls are always wishing things were better. And it is comfortable to think that in the worst of times amendment may be looked to. The old proverb says, 'When things come to the worst they mend'; and a faithful man takes up the words of the Psalmist, and he says, '*It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand: for they have destroyed Thy law*,' so looking to the mercy-seat for help in time of need.

As an instructive writer says, 'Within the visible Church there is always a communion of saints, a circle within a circle, a sanctuary beyond the outer court, uncontaminated by buyers and sellers; and these are always looking upwards': and thus, surrounded as we are by the godless and the profane, attacked by the infidel, and undermined by ambitious hypocrisy, those that are wise amongst us are bound to protect the Church of their forefathers with weapons not carnal but spiritual, and to hand down unscathed to our posterity' his words of sound doctrine; doctrine such as Wiclif at this time began to unroll and promulgate; the man who, had he lived later, would have been in the foremost ranks of the Reformation, boldly holding forth the torch of the Gospel. Nor was he in his day without mistakes, who was called to a mighty work—

> Set to fray
> Old darkness from his throne.

One was he, notwithstanding any tares that might grow up amongst the wheat, unto whom the word of God was light and life, and whose chiefest joy it was to tell it out amongst his brethren; one to have said with Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, of after times—

Welcome, dear Book, soul's joy and food ! the feast
Of spirits ; heaven entranced lies in thee !
Thou art life's charter, the dove's spotless nest
Where souls are hatch'd into eternitie.

In thee the hidden stone, the manna lies ;
Thou art the great elixir, rare and choice ;
The key that opens to all mysteries
The Word in character, God in the voice.

Somewhere about the times of Wiclif—say some forty or fifty years after his death—a conversation above hinted at took place under my Talking Friend's boughs between the priest of Hanwood and the priest of Pontesbury. He and the latter on many points did not think alike, but there was a great attachment between the two ; and Hugo de Werde, or Watur, of Hanwood, never spoke of Philip ap Howel, of Pontesbury, but with the greatest respect. He had Welsh blood in his veins, and the priest of Hanwood, who had been used to hear so much of Tredithic, liked him the better for it.

There is a remarkable passage in the ' Regnum Papisticum ' of Thomas Naogeorgus, concerning the secular clergy in country parishes, in which he speaks, as was natural, very harshly of the papacy. I quote it, in part, because of the admission that there were good and learned men amongst them, and certainly the priests of Hanwood and of Pontesbury were of that number :—

Sunt et pastores populi per sordida rura,
Perque urbes omnes, recto qui tramite munus
Sunt illud nacti, partim doctique bonique,
Indocti partim, talique haud munere digni :
Horum est officii populis servire docendo
Atque ministrando sacra. Si de gente papali
Plebibus utilitas aliqua emanare valeret
Hanc hi præberent. Nec enim pigra otia solum
Sectari, sed oportet eos incumbere libris
Si modo ridiculi nolint, cæcique videri.

It could not be said of either of these two good priests by the Rea side, ' *Ye are idle, ye are idle* ' ; or, ' *His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant.*' HE, who said all things well, would not have said of them, ' *They be blind leaders of the*

blind.' On the contrary, they acted up to His most holy words—'*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*' —and were torches which, whilst they gave light to those about them, were not likely to be darkness within themselves. In my Talking Friend's words, as far as I can recollect them, 'Well-informed men were both these priests—the priest of Hanwood and the priest of Pontesbury—men, in their day, fit to have been the king's Latiners, for not only did they know Latin' (which is the first sense of the word '*Latinarius*'), 'but they knew Welsh, too; and, as for the priest of Pontesbury, he could have conversed with Iorwerth Goch, or the Red Edward of the border traditions.'

Such were the two men who at this time spoke freely of Wiclif, not understanding or knowing what we know now, but convinced, both of them, that there were a stirring and a commotion among the dry bones of the land, and that good must come out of it. But I will give the conversation as my Talking Friend—the Old Oak now—reported it.

The priest of Pontesbury opened the discussion by saying, 'Strange reports are these you bring from the abbot's parlour; and no wonder he is disturbed at the spread of all these new-fangled teachings. Much as I wish the advancement of knowledge—and I wish it most sincerely—I could not bear to see it shouldered in by confusion and anarchy, such as is evidently coupled with it. Does it not appear clearly enough that Wat Tyler's confederates and the Wiclifites are of one and the same body; and did not John Ball admit before his death that he was a Wiclifite? After all, I am afraid they and their predecessors, the Lollards, are not so ill matched.'

To which the priest of Hanwood replied: 'It has always been the custom of the world to affix either ridiculous or unpopular names, and so it has been in this instance. No doubt many of Wiclif's followers—as I stated in the abbot's presence, who always hears me patiently—were wild and tumultuous; but there was a great proportion which, as he led the way, sought for truth only; and at the present moment, though he has been dead some twenty years, his

name is everywhere spoken of, and his true followers are the best-informed men amongst us. You know my sentiments well enough as to helping our people to the knowledge of the Bible, and I think he has kindled a spark which the powers of darkness will never put out. Up to this time our people on the Rea side only know of it by the hearing of the ear; and all I have been able to do, through the help of the scriptorium at the abbey, is to impress upon those who will lend me the willing ear the Psalms and the Gospels. The former, and portions of the latter, we have only hitherto had in the Anglo-Saxon. Within a while, I hope, our people will know them in the vernacular—that is to say, in the vulgar or their mother tongue. I hope, also, our superiors will throw no impediments in our way, for the Spirit lives in every line of the holy Book; and as St. Hierom says, who is one of my favourite studies, "*Quis possit credere, quod instar flammæ, quæ extincta desinit esse quod fuerat, extinguatur Spiritus Sanctus, et sustineat abolitionem sui?*" That may not be. "*Et reverà indumentum virtutis Spiritûs Sancti gratia est.*" To which he presently adds in the same letter, I only read yesterday, "*Absque enim Spiritu Sancto imperfectum est mysterium Trinitatis.*"'

'From what I hear in some quarters,' interposed his friend of Pontesbury, 'the spread of knowledge is not wished so anxiously by some as it is by you and me, and our simple opinions about the sacrament of the Mass might bring us into trouble,' as words which imply that discussion had reached even as far as Cruck Meole and the shallows of the Rea, though it is most likely these plain-spoken men had never heard of the twelve propositions against transubstantiation, and to them the '*Trilogus*' and the '*Wycket*' were unknown names. In fact, of many, perhaps of most, of Wiclif's opinions on controverted matters, they had only heard reports; nor did they give any credit to notions vamped up after his death—such as his opposition to Government under the specious disguise that 'dominion is founded in grace'; for with their plain, strong common sense they would have asked at once, 'Who's to know who, as governor, is in a state of grace? for certes, many governors in our days are grace-

less enough, and need praying for;' the very words of the priest of Pontesbury, which he spoke with reference to one of the high estates of the land, who lived not far off, and was seldom occupied in protecting the rights of the people. It was after one of those offhand speeches that the priest of Pontesbury said to his brother of Hanwood, 'Some day or another you and I shall get into trouble, and perhaps be displaced. The temporal powers, most likely, will cashier me for earnest desire (in which you, too, join) to increase the liberties of the people; of you the spiritual powers will lay hold, at the command of our supposed lord and master at Rome, as a decided Wiclifite.'

To which the priest of Hanwood replied, 'A small matter is the living of Hanwood, and I have lived long enough to know in my old favourite's words, "*Affatim dives est, qui cum Christo pauper est.*" Once let me see the holy Evangel in the people's hands, and I shall lay me down in peace and take my rest.'

And the priest of Pontesbury replied, in lines which have since been ascertained to be those of old Godfrey, prior of Winchester, who lived about A.D. 1100—

Vive Deo, tibi mors requies, tibi vita labori,
Vive Deo, mors est vivere, vita mori.

But it was stated above that the priest of Hanwood and the priest of Pontesbury did not altogether agree upon all the then current views of Wiclif, and it was upon this occasion that the latter said he had heard—which showed their doubts—'that when Wiclif's doctrines began to prevail in the University of Oxford, the sermons before they were preached publicly had to be examined by the Doctors of Divinity,' like as tracts nowadays are examined by the committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. And he added, 'There are those who say that Wiclif turned reformer because he was turned out of the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, in Oxford; but believe nothing of the sort, for he was much too good a man to let revenge militate with his Christianity.'

On which report I may add here that the priest of Pontesbury showed his wisdom and discretion, as it is now ascertained from the Record Office that there were two John

Wiclifs—Wicclifs, or Whyteclyves—in the Church at this time, and, says a Quarterly Reviewer, after sifting the question, 'Till further evidence can be brought forward on the other side we are justified, we think, in assuming that the reformer and the Warden of Canterbury Hall are two distinct persons.' Certainly there was no littleness of mind in such a man as he was, but openness and sincerity of purpose. In the words of the 'Examination' of William Thorpe, penned with his own hand, and given by John Foxe in the 'Acts and Monuments,' 'Maister John Wickliffe was holden of full manie men the greatest clarke that they knew then living; and therewith he was named a passing rulie man and an innocent in his living; and therefore greate men communed oft with him, and they loved so his learning that they writ it, and busilie enforced them to rule themselves thereafter.' And the above extract mostly concerns itself with the history of the county, for Foxe, in giving the autograph of Thorpe's 'Examination,' preserves to us his testimony: 'The thirde Sunday after Easter, A.D. 1407, William Thorpe came into the towne of Shrewsberie, and though leave granted unto him to preache, he said openlie in St. Chad's Church in his sermon that the sacrament of the aulter after the consecration was materiallised, and that images should in no wise be worshipped, and that men should not goe on pilgrimages, and that priests have no title to tithes, and that it is not lawful for to seduce in any wise.' Such are his words; and although all he said was not quite truth, it was said most truthfully.

But, said the priest of Pontesbury—who maintained his own views, and sometimes, evidently, as my Talking Friend said, with a desire to draw out his friend of Hanwood, who was a very well read man, as well as a well informed one—'Wiclif's simple priests were but mendicants over again, and they were only doing afresh what St. Francis had done before.' And to this the priest of Hanwood assented partially, but he did not assent to the statement of his neighbours when he added, 'These simple priests were no *better* than the mendicants.' On the contrary, he maintained that these priests were to be as new blood in an old body, and that by them and their simple preaching Wiclif hoped to

reform the land. It was not only the corruption of the clergy generally to which Wiclif was opposed, but to the coveteousness and the vices of the mendicants in particular. In fact, he looked upon them as the pope's journeymen, or, as they have since been called, 'the militia of the pope,' whose taxes in England at this time, it has been said, were five times as much as the king's. It is so, indeed, affirmed and stated in a remonstrance of the commons in the year 1376. And the priest of Hanwood, looking to the many and great corruptions of the times, maintained against his brother of Pontesbury that Wiclif was raised up to do a great work; and he added, with his usual warmth, 'Up to this time the more his teaching has been opposed the more it has grown, having in it the vitality of truth,' and he quoted the lines of his favourite Horace:—

Non hydra secto corpore firmior
Vinci dolentem crevit in Herculem.

And when his brother of Pontesbury sighed and said, 'We are all of us far, indeed, behind our duties,' he comforted him with those other grand lines from the Epistle to Augustus, remarking withal 'that they who strove for the mastery had still to settle down under great disappointments, and to bear up against obloquy and misconstruction.'

Ploravere suis non respondere favorem
Speratum meritis: diram qui contudit hydram,
Notaque fatali portenta labore subegit,
Comperit invidiam supremo fine domari.
Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes
Infrà se positas: extinctus amabitur idem.

But I may now pass on from the remarks of these two worthy men, and make a few statements such as length of time has brought to light.

As to the charges brought against Wiclif—and which the reader must seek for at large in his Life—many, no doubt, were altogether false, and most of them mistaken ones. It is not denied that he held some very peculiar opinions, and maintained them with the logical and scholastic subtilty of the time; but, on the whole, what he taught was pretty much in character with the doctrines of the Reformation—that is to

say, with the teaching of those Scriptures which he and his assistants in the good work translated from the 'Vulgate,' and which he loved from his heart, and laboured to distribute; as one who would have said before all men living—

> It is a thing that all men may lament
> When clarkes keep close the truth lest they be shent;
> And yet both now and then
> The greatest clarkes prove not the wisest men.
> It is not right that men forbid should be
> To speake the truth, al were he bond or free.

And yet it has been thought that for thus speaking truth, and when evil days fell upon him, he was almost deserted of his own kindred. The writer of an article in the 'Quarterly Review,' July 1858, quite inclines to the statement which Dr. Vaughan plausibly inferred from a passage in the 'Tract on Wedded Men and Wives,' a manuscript in Corpus Christi College. Beyond a doubt in the time of which we are now writing, except with a select few, such as were the priest of Hanwood and the priest of Pontesbury—at issue only with his brother on minor points—the name of Wiclif, however much caught at by lay and borrel men, was held lightly of by the 'Clerici,' or, as we should now call them, educated Churchmen. All, or almost all, the chroniclers (interspersing now and then a testimony to his humble worth) were hostile to him. 'The earliest work,' says the able reviewer just now referred to, 'which was dictated by a different spirit was that of Dr. James, the first librarian appointed by Sir Thomas Bodley to his newly-founded library. His professed object is to "vindicate the memory of a great divine, whose soul is with God, whose fame is with the world, and whose bones, but for the malice of his cruel enemies, had rested peacefully in their grave"'—a book now almost inaccessible.

We now all of us know, who know his life, that he was moved with an entire love of truth for the truth's sake, and with a longing to reform that Church whose dogmas he had hardly learnt to dispute, but of whose abuses he was sure from the study of God's holy Word. Gascoigne said in his 'Fruites of Warre,' two centuries and more after what Wiclif said in the days of the divine Edward:—

O bishops, deacons, prelates, priests, and all,
Stryve not for tithes, for glebe lande, nor for fees
For polling Peter's pence, for popish pall,
For proud pluralities, nor new degrees.
And though you think it lubberlike to leese,
Yet shoulde you lend that one halfe of your coat.

. . . . . .

These spiritual pastors, nay, these spiteful popes,
Which ought to lende a lanthorn to the rest,
Had they themselves but light to see the ropes
And snares of hell which for their feet are drest,
Because they pill and poll, because they wrest,
Because they covet more than borrel men
(Harde be their heartes), yet would they tremble then.

Wiclif clearly was a man, to use the title of one of his own treatises, entirely set against 'Antichrist and his meynee,' notwithstanding the charges brought against him to prove him heretical. Like Luther in the days of the Reformation, he said some things in an over-earnest haste, some things inconsiderately, unadvisedly, perhaps, like Moses, the meekest of men; but his heart was in the right place, and his name, like Erasmus' and Colet's, remains among the posterities, as it is fit and right it should. The '*Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Joannis Wyclif cum Tritico*,' the collection whether of the Carmelite Thomas Netter, of Saffron Walden (whence called Waldensis), or of Stephen Patryngton, 'an eminent controversialist and prosecutor of the new way,' were published in part, in 1858, by the Record Commission; and it is upon this that the article in the 'Quarterly Review' is grounded, which has been several times referred to, and is worth a careful perusal. Nothing can be fairer to Wiclif's memory. 'The Bundle of Tares,' we may be quite sure, is a very little matter when compared with the kidneys of his wheat.

Called into the councils of the king, by whom he was appointed to Lutterworth, and 'consulted and trusted by the most eminent men of his time, we find him holding the position in the king's councils which Paolo Sarpi subsequently held with the Signori of Venice—the referee in cases of dispute with the Papal Court, the keeper of the public conscience in matters affecting the interests of the Church.' Hence it was that he was appealed to about the papal tribute,

conceded by John, and which was only paid when the sceptre was wielded by feeble hands, and had now been unpaid for thirty-three years.

For ill so hard set in is hard got out.

It has been asked how it was that Wiclif became the favourite of the great, especially of John of Gaunt. Nothing, probably, could be more opposed than the views of the Duke of Lancaster and those of this great reformer, the harbinger, if not the apostle, of the Reformation—the one a feudal supporter 'to the core,' the other what would have been called almost a democrat, quite a man of the people. There was a point, however, on which they met, and that was the 'lowering of proud prelates.' Wiclif would have reduced their pomp to the rule of apostolical poverty and purity, which he closely combined; John of Gaunt would have done the same, but it was because they trod upon the heels of men of high estate like his, and stood between the wind and their nobility. Lancaster, at first, was one to have said with the irony of his class, 'Let the poor, simple student

With learning cram his shelf,
Know books, all, all things, but himself.'

But in saying so he would have entirely missed his man, as he found out afterwards; for of all others Wiclif was the man to whom one might have applied the well-known words of the great philosopher, Ἄνδρα χερσί τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ τετράγωνον, and great things were they that were done between his birth in 1324 and his death in 1384.

The persecution of William of Wykeham by John of Gaunt showed that he had no very great love for the Church. But yet, after all, there must have been an attachment of some sort between this great duke and the humble reformer, though the former was attached to, and associated with, the very mendicants of whom the latter was the staunch and stern opponent. After all, 'Was it the real goodness and the simplicity of life in Wiclif which made John of Gaunt his unwilling friend?' Such things have been, and will be again. And this probably was the reason why, when he had to appear before the delegates at Lambeth, the Princess of

Wales and the people were on his side. What the reviewer, to whom I am much indebted, asserts of an earlier date, is no doubt true : ' The object of the prosecution of Wiclif was political. Convocation arraigned as heresies, endangering the social fabric, those doctrines which Wiclif preached for the reformation, and John of Gaunt advocated for the humiliation of the Church.'

It was not till after the acknowledgment of Urban VI. by the English Court that Wiclif wrote his treatise '*De Veritate S. Scripturæ*,' in which he maintained the absolute necessity of translating the Scriptures into the vulgar (or mother) tongue of the people, on which, of course, followed his absolute breach with the Church of Rome. This was but a few months before his death, of which the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury seemed to know more than might have been expected. They knew for certain that he lived two years after his banishment from Oxford at Lutterworth, and that he was busily employed there, notwithstanding his failing health. They did *not* know —for how should they?—that he wrote at this time almost as much as he had ever written before. It is of his peaceful death at Lutterworth that Fuller says, ' Admirable that a hare so often hunted with so many packs of dogs should die at last quietly sitting in his form!'

Of course these worthy priests did not know of the disinterment of Wiclif's bones, as it was after their day ; but my Talking Friend said that one of their successors did, and he has often heard the circumstance alluded to beneath his shade.

It was in the eighth session of the Council of Constance, A.D. 1415, that his bones were ordered to be dug up and cast into a dunghill ; but it was not till thirteen years later that the order was put into execution by Richard Flemyng, bishop of Lincoln and diocesan of Lutterworth, by the order of the pope. And, says old Fuller, ' to Lutterworth they come (sumner, commissary, official, chancellor, proctors, doctors, and the servants, so that the remnant of the body would not hold out a bone amongst so many hands), take what was left out of the grave, and burnt them to ashes, and cast them into Swift, a neighbouring brook running hard by. Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn,

Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wiclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over.' And with this Council, and with the name of Wiclif, those of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, condemned there, are justly remembered and commemorated.

It is John Foxe, in his 'Actes and Monuments,' that states it is doubtful whether they ungraved the right body or no, 'and turned him from earth to ashes, which ashes they also took and threw into the river. And so was he resolved into three elements—earth, fire, and water—thinking thereby utterly to extinguish and abolish both the name and doctrine of Wiclif for ever. Not much unlike the example of the old Pharisees and sepulchre knights, who, when they had brought the Lord into the grave, thought to make Him sure never to rise again. But these and all others must know that as there is no counsel against the Lord, so there is no keeping down of verity; but it will spring up and come out of dust and ashes, as appeared right well in this man; for though they digged up his body, burnt his bones, and drowned his ashes, yet the word of God, and the truth of his doctrine, with the fruit and success thereof, they could not burn, which yet to this day, for the most part of his articles, doth remain; notwithstanding the transitory body and bones of the man were thus consumed and dispersed, as by this picture here set forth to thine eyes, gentle reader, may appear.' And a very painful picture it is; but it is pleasant to read such passages in our old writers, as they leave no stain behind.

> Where coarse humanity defiles not, there
> The snowy-footed angels lightly skim
> The taintless soil; the fragrance of their plumes
> Fans the pure air where chokes no breath of sin
> The limpid current.

But I must not conclude these mixed remarks on the life of the great reformer without giving that beautiful sonnet of Wordsworth's, in which he refers to old Fuller's words:—

> Once more the Church is seized with sudden fear,
> And at her call is Wiclif disenhumed:
> Yea, his dry bones to ashes are consumed
> And flung into the brook that travels near.

Forthwith that ancient voice which streams can hear
Thus speaks (that voice which walks upon the wind,
Though seldom heard by any human kind):
'As thou these ashes, little brook, wilt bear
Into the Avon, Avon to the tide
Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,
Into main ocean they, this deed accurst
An emblem yields to friends and enemies
How the bold teacher's doctrine, sanctified
By truth, shall spread, throughout the world dispersed.'

It was on another and evidently on a much later occasion that these two worthy priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury held a conversation together about Chaucer, whom they called a 'maker,' or a 'verse-wright'—so my Talking Friend said—and they seemed to speak of him as a friend of Wiclif's. Whether this was so or not is not now easy to say, as his account of the friars was only the popular feeling of the day; but there are still those who maintain that the village priest so inimitably described by Chaucer is John Wiclif, the Reformer, of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire.

The present is no unfit occasion for a few remarks on the progress of the English language, which is closely connected with our earliest poets.

As far as I recollect, no allusion was ever made by my Talking Friend through the priest of Hanwood to the author of 'Piers Ploughman,' though there are many allusions in that remarkable poem to the neighbourhood of Wales, and there is little doubt that he resided in the neighbourhood of the Malvern Hills, in Worcestershire, for it is there that the dreamer (whether Robert Langland or not, of Cherbury Mortimer, in Shropshire) fell asleep and saw his vision, as I have more than once fallen asleep by the Herefordshire Beacon. The introductory lines, as printed by T. Wright, will show the language he spoke:—

In a somer seson
Whan softe was the sonne,
I shoop me into shroudes
As I a sheepe weere,
In habit as an heremite
Unholy of werkes,
Wente wide in this world
Wonders to sere;

Ac on a May morwenynge
On Malvern hilles
Me bifel a ferly
Of fairye me thoghte.
I was wery for-wandred
And wente me to reste
Under a brood bank
By a bournes side;
And as I lay and lenede
And loked on the watres
I slombred into a slepyng,
It sweyed so murye.

Whoever was the author, he was subsequent to the hermit of Hampole, by name Richard Rolle, near Doncaster, in Yorkshire, who died in 1349. From the allusions to the treaty of Bretigny, to the sufferings of the British army, to divers pestilences, and to the great wind on January 15, 1362, we get pretty nearly at the date of this remarkable vision. Indeed, Mr. Wright supposes it to have been composed in the latter part of this year, when the effects of the great wind were fresh in people's memory, and when the treaty of Bretigny had become a subject of popular discontent. The other poem, 'Piers Ploughman's Creed,' is of later date—perhaps as late as 1393—as is readily inferred from the mention of Wiclif and the persecution of Walter Brute at Hereford. The writer clearly identifies himself with the Wiclifites.

It certainly is curious that the Old Oak should not have mentioned him. But so it is; and as the old adage has it, '*Sanctus Bernardus* (or *Alanus*) *non videt omnia.*'

The mass of political songs, as well as the satirical ballads which go under the name of Walter Mapes, many of them preceded the time of Chaucer, dating from the days of Edward II.; and in most of them, as in Chaucer and his contemporaries, the corruption of the papacy and the idleness of the monks are girded at. If they were introductory to 'Piers Ploughman,' so were they to Gower and Chaucer, Occleve and Lydgate.

Of Gower again—the 'moral Gower' (that enviable name given to him by Chaucer and by others afterwards down to the time of Hawes—the Old Oak recorded nothing; yet was he a little Chaucer's senior, and lived, perhaps, as long, for

his will is dated 1408. And most certainly he added greatly to the stores of the English tongue, though we have only now his '*Confessio Amantis*' to turn to. The '*Vox Clamantis*' is in Latin, and unpublished, and I do not know if his '*Speculum Meditantis*' has ever been seen. Still he left a great name behind him, and John Skelton, in his 'Garlande of Laurell' —like Piers Ploughman, he too saw his vision in the forest of Galtres—thus bespeaks his praise, coupling his name with Chaucer's and Lydgate's :—

> And as I thus sad sadly amonge them avysid,
> I saw Gower, that first garnisshed our Englysshe rude,
> And maister Chaucer, that nobly enterprysyd
> How that our Englysshe might freshly be ennewed ;
> The monke of Bury then after them ensuyd,
> Dane Johnn Lydgate : theis Englysshe poetes three
> As I ymagenyd, repayred unto me.

The priest of Hanwood, as will have been readily inferred, was a great student of the English language ; and it was about this time—that is to say, sometime during the reign of Henry IV. or V.—that the conversation above alluded to in the abbey parlour at Shrewsbury took place, after which the good man by the Rea side always contended that Chaucer must be a great ornament to his country.

Nor was it unlikely that the fame of him should have reached the midland counties, for, a travelled man—pensioned valet or yeoman to Edward III., married to Philippa Rouet, the sister of Catherine Swinford, first the mistress and afterward the wife of John of Gaunt—employed subsequently in missions to Genoa and France, he was, even politically, a great man in his day, notwithstanding the trouble of banishment and imprisonment which fell upon him in his latter days, occasioned, it is thought, by his taking part with the Wiclifites. But it mattered not.

> Simple truth severe
> Best seemeth aged lips.

But, passing by his political position, and the after troubles of Chaucer's life, the great glory that attaches to his name now is the improvement of our language. And although nothing

of his was published at the time we are now speaking of (the 'Canterbury Tales' were not published by Caxton till 1475–6, though the pilgrimage, from internal evidence, was written after the year 1386), yet was his repute spread abroad, and, as I said, it was a subject of conversation in the abbot's parlour, who spoke of him as one of Wiclif's band, but admitted him to be a great man in many ways. Whoever visited the old town spoke of him as the Court poet—poetry being a very common matter of talk in those days, when every pilgrim could recite more than one ballad, and when such a recitation or a tale of foreign lands was constantly called for. To such tales allusion is made in the Man of Lawes Prologue, where Chaucer introduces his own name :—

> But Chaucer—though he can but lewedly
> On metres and on riming certeynly—
> Hath sayd hem in soche English as he can
> Of olde time, as knoweth many man.
> And if he have not sayd hem, leeve brother,
> In one book, he hath sayd hem in another.

'With what care,' says Southey, in his 'Sketches of the Progress of English Poetry from Chaucer to Cowper,' 'the vernacular poetry was cultivated as an art may be seen in the metrical romances, in many of which the stanzas are very graceful, and in others not less curiously elaborate. The first reformation which it underwent was to free it from some gratuitous difficulties, and divest it of the cumbrous ornaments with which it had been overloaded. Chaucer, who is deservedly accounted the father of English poetry, effected this. The line of English poets begins with him, as that of English kings with William the Conqueror; and if the change introduced by him was not so great, his title is better. Kings there were before the Conquest, and of great and glorious memory too; but the poets before Chaucer are like the heroes before Agamemnon: even of those whose works have escaped oblivion the names of most have perished. Father Chaucer, throwing off all trammels, simplified our verses. Nature had given him the ear, and the eye, and the imagination of a poet; and his diction was such as that of all great poets has ever been, and ever will be, in all countries—neither

cramped by pedantic rules, nor vitiated by prevailing fashions, nor raised on stilts, nor drooping for want of strength; but rising and falling with the subject, and always suited to it.' To which he presently adds, 'Chaucer stands in the first rank with Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, and in variety of power Shakespeare is his only peer.'

In referring to the language of Chaucer, it may be stated that he was a man of the world besides being a poet, and he was familiar with the speech of the country, the city, and the Court, and used it according to his subject. And I may add that shrewd, intelligent, clever men of the world usually speak the language of the world well. On this point there is a remarkable passage in Sir Philip Sidney's 'Defence of Poesy,' and the veteran Lord Palmerston's speeches are an excellent additional illustration.

'Undoubtedly,' said Sidney—warbler of poetic prose, as Cowper described him with happy felicity of expression—'at least to my opinion undoubtedly, I have found in divers small-learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning; of which I can guess no other cause but that the courtier, following that which, by practice, he findeth fittest to nature, therein (though he know it not) doth according to art, though not by art; where the other, using art to show art, and not hide art (as in these cases he should do) flieth from nature and, indeed, abuseth art.'

With a little painstaking, Chaucer's language will be found, like Shakespeare's, to be the language for all time; and hence it was that Sir Walter Scott wrote in his dedicatory epistle to the, perhaps, greatest effort of his genius—'Ivanhoe'—'He who first opens Chaucer or any other ancient poet is so much struck with the obsolete spelling, multiplied consonants, and antiquated appearance of the language that he is apt to lay down the work in despair, as encrusted too deep with the rust of antiquity to permit his judging of its merits or tasting its beauties. But if some intelligent and accomplished friend points out to him that the difficulties by which he is startled are more in appearance than reality; if, by reading aloud to him, or by reducing the ordinary words to the modern orthography, he satisfies his proselyte that only about one-

tenth part of the words employed are, in fact, obsolete, the novice may be easily persuaded to approach the "well of English undefiled," with the certainty that a slender degree of patience will enable him to enjoy both the humour and the pathos with which old Geoffrey delighted the age of Cressy and of Poitiers.'

Daniel, in his 'Musophilus,' speaking of the high races that had clean disappeared—quite vanished and past—since Chaucer's time, adds feelingly that he still lives, and shall live, and then remarks:—

> Yet what a time hath he wrested from time,
> And won upon the mighty waste of days
> Unto the immortal honour of our clime,
> That by his means came first adorned with bays,
> Unto the sacred relics of whose rime
> We yet are bound in zeal to offer praise?

Such was the man they spoke of in the abbot's parlour at Shrewsbury, and he and his poesy were a subject of much conversation afterwards with the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury—no small proof of the penetration of these humble men.

It has been supposed that there was a breach in their latter days between Gower and Chaucer, originating in an indirect sarcasm in the Prologue to the Man of Lawes tale, said to have been the cause of the suppression of the compliment in the Epilogue to the *Confessio Amantis*, but which the reader will yet find there. In all probability this breach was an imaginary one. The lines are these:—

> And grete well Chaucer, whun ye mete,
> As my disciple and my poete;
> For in the floures of his youthe,
> In sondrie wyse, as he well couth,
> Of dittes and of songes glade
> The whiche he for my sake made,
> The londe fulfilled is over all,
> Whereof to him in speciall,
> Above all other I am most helde.
> For thy nowe in his dayes old
> Thou shalt him tell this message,
> That he upon his later age,

To sette an ende of all his werke,
As he whiche is mine owne clerke,
Do make his testament of love,
As thou hast done thy shrifte above,
So that my court it maie recorde.

But it is time now to call to mind some reminiscences of my Talking Friend.

It was connected with these days that he told of one John Gough, a notorious rogue, who had fled for refuge to the churchyard at Hanwood, in which, not far from the old yew tree, there stood a wooden cross, which has long ago disappeared. The priest said there was not a greater knave in the country, and that he had already more than one mark of burning on the palm of his 'hand'—alluding, probably, to the old custom of marking persons who abjured the realm, if, at least, it existed thus early. In later days—in Henry VIII.'s time—reference is made to it in the Shrewsbury accounts. The last remnant of it was to be found on deserters.

On most occasions the priest of Hanwood was inclined to defend all places of sanctuary, and he thought them to have originated in the Cities of Refuge. In early days, especially in early Norman days, it was well that the poor hunted Saxon should have some place to flee unto as his '*frid-stoll*,' for so was the well known '*sedes lapidea*' of St. John's of Beverley called in the Saxon tongue. It was the abuse only of these sanctuaries that the priest of Hanwood objected to, and although he thought the forenamed John Gough unworthy of the '*vexillum Sanctæ Ecclesiæ*,' yet, for the sake of others, he did not wish to see him hastily removed; for, in good sooth, at that time

His grief might be compared well
To one sore sick that hears the passing bell.

The consequence was, he was protected for the time being, but my Talking Friend said he came to grief afterwards, and disappeared from the valley of the Rea. As Richard Glover said, in his dry way, centuries afterwards, 'He that would have fed with him needed a long spoon,' alluding to some one like him, no doubt. Modern readers will call to mind Sir

Walter's 'Fortunes of Nigel' and Shadwell's 'Squire of Alsatia,' which tell of the well-known refuge at Whitefriars.

The priest of Hanwood used to mention another instance of plea of sanctuary, of which William de Byryton had told him—not improbably an ancestor of the Beringtons who were settled after this at the *Mot* or *Gemot Hall* in woods above Hanwood, and who still hold the property. 'It was mothering Sunday' (or Mid Lent, as we should now call it), said his friend William, 'and my housekeeper had gone home to Newtown, in Montgomeryshire, *white-potting*' (as was annually the custom in those days, when nothing could restrain a lover of hasty-pudding from the festival dish of the household); 'and on the very afternoon of that Sunday she saw in that well-known old church'—much altered since—'a gaunt, thin man, with ragged locks, and with a look unutterably miserable, clinging to the *perke* (what you now call the rood-loft), before which lights were burning. It took away, she said, the whole of the pleasure of her home visit, and she never should forget it. She was quite sure he must have committed some great crime, so wan was he and woe-begone!'

White-pot was formerly a more common term than it is now—confined at present pretty much to Devonshire—but it is curious that the Americans of Nantucket should have taken it up, using it as a term for visiting among relations and friends. We retain it more generally in the word 'pot-luck,' which implies genuine English hospitality. In J. R. Bartlett's 'Glossary of Words and Phrases usually regarded as peculiar to the United States,' 'white-pot' is put down as a kind of pudding; and New England is specially quoted as using it. In Old England none could say of 'pot-luck'—

> Our false pleasure is but care disguised,

for a hearty welcome is better far than cakes and delicacies without it; and from those days downwards to our own such English welcome has ever been found on the Rea side.

'Somewhere about this time,' said my Talking Friend, 'the priest of Hanwood was visited by an old acquaintance, and something more, Edward Harries by name, who had for many years held a small piece of preferment in Staffordshire,

and for his excellent character and true Christian service had been presented to something better in Warwickshire. The good man came by special invitation—first, with a view to rest after hard labour, and then to ramble over the valley of the Rea, and to look over the ground of the far-famed battle of Shrewsbury on the Severn. Never was anyone so delighted as this overwrought man with the lovely village of Hanwood. He called it,' said my Talking Friend, 'a little paradise on earth. He had lost a son at sea, and the quiet and repose of the valley were to him quite heavenly; and day after day he strolled from shallow to pool, and from pool to shallow, delighting in the music of the waters.'

And I repeated to myself those beautiful lines of Keble, thinking how some such hallowed thoughts might have passed through the mind of the old priest's friend:—

> But thou art with him there,
> Pledge of the untir'd arm, and eye that cannot sleep;
> The eye that watches o'er wild ocean's dead,
> Each in his coral cave,
> Fondly as if the green turf wrapped his head
> Fast by his father's grave.

It was upon this occasion that the priest of Hanwood said, as he looked upon his holy visitor, 'He was no *chop-church*, he never made a merchandise of souls, his heart was in his work, and he would see that his Master's work was done!'

It so happened that I had never heard the term 'chop-church' used before, but on inquiry my Talking Friend told me it was a very common term in those days, when benefices were constantly exchanged, and the people but little looked to. And I bethought me, with some humiliation, how benefices now were daily bought and sold, and even advertised in the common prints, as goods and chattels are advertised!

My Talking Friend had a sensible pleasure in referring to the intercourse between Edward Harries and the priest on the Rea side, who were more than once joined by the priest that was at Pontesbury in those days; and I thought of Shakespeare's lines:—

> When holy and devout religious men
> Are at their beads, 'tis hard to draw them thence,
> So sweet is zealous contemplation.

They never met again, as my Talking Friend more than once informed me; and in doing so I could fancy there was a sad and melancholy rustling in his leaves. Such is the impression that real goodness leaves behind! The trees of the wood rejoice at it. But

> A churchman once corrupted, oh, avoid!
> A fellow that makes religion his stalking horse,
> He breeds a plague.

'God knows,' said T. Hearne, the antiquary, ''tis a poor zeal for religion when they are ashamed and afraid to appear publicly in a good cause, but act in a clandestine way, and are not willing that even actions that are laudable should be known.' And up to this time there had been, comparatively, little stress made upon the advance either of religion or education, but the move which Wiclif made was, under God, a great incentive, and henceforward progress, if not quick, was sure; and the invention of printing, within forty years more, produced results which the wisest and the best of men at that time little anticipated. An overruling Power brought all this about, using the intelligence of man at His time appointed. Satan might say, as it were mocking the Deity, in unhallowed presumption and arrogance—

> 'Sia Destin cio, ch' io voglio;'

but necessity, and chance, and destiny, in a wrong sense, touch Him not. It is almost unnecessary to add that the Reformation followed in the wake of the discovery of printing; and although books at first were few and far between, yet even then was the means of spreading knowledge marvellously increased; and those who taught the people, as the old priest at Hanwood did, had their hands strengthened. But I am anticipating the time, and will only add in old Camden's words, 'Good Lord, how spaciously might a learned pen walk in this argument!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OWEN GLENDOWER.

Procerum motus hæc cuncta sequuntur.
Humanum paucis vivit genus.

LUCAN, *Pharsal.* v. 342.

With cruel tournament the squadrons join;
Where cattle pastured late now scatter'd lies
With carcasses and arms the ensanguined field,
Deserted.

Paradise Lost, xi. 652, &c.

Rythyn is a dull town, but it possessed plenty of interest for me, for as I strolled with my guide about the streets I remembered that I was treading the ground which the wild bands of Glendower had trod, and where the great struggle commenced which for fourteen years convulsed Wales, and for some time shook England to its centre.—BORROW'S *Wild Wales*, vol. i. 158.

Bolingbroke. Come, lords, away;
To fight with Glendower and his 'complices;
A while to work, and after holiday.

Richard II. act iii. sc. 1.

WHAT Lucan says in the first motto is but an o'ertrue tale, and always found to be the case in great convulsions and disturbances; so was it on the deposition of Richard II. And the usurpation of high-reaching Bolingbroke, but from what we call accidental circumstances, would not only have injured the people seriously in their estates, but have crippled and destroyed their liberties. Happily the usurper's fears counteracted the evil of his projects, and he was constrained many times to cringe to those for whom he had no love in his heart; and he felt it, as men will do, for

Those are the killing griefs which dare not speak.

His mind, indeed, was ever haunted by the truth that, though Richard was dead, Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, whose grandmother was daughter of Lionel, Duke of Clarence,

elder brother of John of Gaunt, was the real heir to the throne.

Hume's remarks on this head are penned with his usual strong sense, and will leave a clear view on the reader's mind: 'The English had so long been familiarised to the hereditary succession of their monarchs—the instances of departing from it had always borne such strong symptoms of injustice and violence, and so little of a national choice or election, and the returns to the true line had ever been deemed such fortunate incidents in their history—that Henry was afraid lest, in resting his title on the consent of the people, he should build on a foundation to which the people themselves were not accustomed, and whose solidity they would with difficulty be brought to recognise. The idea, too, of choice seemed always to imply that of conditions and a right of recalling the consent upon any supposed violation of them; an idea which was not naturally agreeable to a sovereign, and might, in England, be dangerous to the subjects, who, lying so much under the influence of turbulent nobles, have ever paid but an imperfect obedience even to their hereditary princes. For these reasons Henry was determined never to have recourse to this claim; the only one on which his authority could consistently stand. He rather chose to patch up his title in the best manner he could from other pretensions. And in the end he left himself, in the eyes of men of sense, no ground of right for his present possession; a very precarious foundation, which, by its very nature, was liable to be overthrown by every faction of the great or prejudice of the people.'

This introduction will suffice for Henry IV.'s usurpation. Of this monarch individually my Talking Friend, the Old Oak by the Rea side, seemed to know little, connecting his name chiefly with a cruel statute, with the fortunes of Owen Glendower, and with the battle of Shrewsbury. It is a MS. of Robert of Gloucester, out of the Heralds' Office, not my Talking Friend, that says of Henry IV.—

> In his tyme was a blasyng starre,
> That alle menne might see ryght farre;
> Wales was rebelle tho noughte, for thi
> Ewyn Glendor was come truly.

A doughty man he was and wise,
In every bataile he had the prise;
Att bataile of Sherewisbury truly
On hys enymyes he hadde the victory.

Passing by days of blood—painful and miserable executions: with the Earl of Rutland bearing the head of his brother-in-law, Lord Spencer, on a pole, at the head of them—it will be more to our purpose here to state that nothing at this time so much interested my Talking Friend as the ways of the Welsh, to whom, like his father before him, he was much attached, still calling them the Cymry. But amongst all the Welsh no name had such a charm in his ears as that of Owen Glendower.

'You can well recollect,' he said to me one fine summer's day, when the Welshmen were passing with their small ponies, loaded with mussels, lobsters, and crabs, as they did periodically, 'you can well recollect the mound of Glendower's Castle between Llangollen and Corwen, and you know how he derived his name from the dark waters of the Dee, for there were few or no surnames in those days. We Saxons, indeed, called him Glendower, in a softer form, from the place of his dwelling, which the Cymry called Glyndyfrdwy—that is, *the valley of black water*. A great chief was he in his generation, descended on his father's side from Gruffudd, to whom Edward I. made the grant of Glyndurdwy. Who on the Welsh border has not heard of Gruffudd, and Madog, and Fychan, and Meredydd? Nor was he less illustrious on his mother's side, who was Helen, the eldest daughter of Thomas ap Llewelyn, a lineal descendant of Rhys ap Tewdor, prince of South Wales, by Eleanor Gôch, daughter of Philip ap Ivor, lord of Iscoed, in Cardiganshire, by Catherine, daughter of the last Llewelyn, by Eleanor, daughter of Simon de Montfort. Purer blood than this could not have flowed in his veins.'

The annexed extracts, from Mr. Borrow's very interesting work, especially to those who know Wales as I once knew it, will illustrate portions of the above paragraphs:—

'The valley of the Dee, of which the Llangollen district forms part, is called in the British tongue Glyndyfrdwy, that

is, the valley of the Dwy, or Dee. The celebrated Welsh chieftain, generally known as Owen Glendower, was surnamed after this valley, the whole of which belonged to him, and in which he had two or three places of strength, though his general abode was a castle in Sycharth, a valley to the south-east of the Berwyn, and distant about twelve miles from Llangollen.'

Later in the same volume we have the notices following:—

'"Do the people talk much of Owen Glendower in these parts?" said I.

'"Plenty," said the man, "and no wonder; for when he was alive he was much about here." Somewhat further on there is a mount, on the bank of the Dee, called the Mount of Owen Glendower, where it is said he used to stand and look out for his enemies.'

And then, within a page or two, we have this description:—

'The Mount of Owen Glendower stands close upon the south bank of the Dee, and is nearly covered with trees of various kinds. It is about thirty feet high from the plain, and about the same diameter at the top. A deep, black part of the river, which here runs far beneath the surface of the field, purls and twists under the northern side, which is very steep, though several large oaks spring out of it. The hill is evidently the work of art, and appeared to me to be some burying-place of old.

'"And this is the hill of Owen Glendower?" said I.

'"This is the hill of Owen Glendower, sir, where he was in the habit of standing to look out for his enemies coming from Chester."

Such was the residence of this great prince, who thus signed his own name, *Yweyn ap Gruffuth, Lord of Glyndwfrdwy*, and of whom I must throw together such mixed reminiscences as I can call to mind from my Talking Friend's different conversations about him. A Welshman from Trê-Valdwyn who had been amongst his followers, by name Howel, often used to recite wonderful histories about him when on a visit to his old friend Davies, who dwelt on the Meole Brook, and was a great musician.

The first little bit of curious history which I call to mind

is connected with the superstitions of the time, and should be recorded, which is this. The Welshman Howel just mentioned told the priest of Hanwood that Glendower's mother was reported to have had a personal visit from the Virgin, who had promised that the child then born should effect the liberation of Wales; and until the battle before Shrewsbury his extraordinary career had seemed to justify such predictions. From all we pick out about him, there is no doubt but that he was superstitious, and with him the *costeg yi halen*, or prelude of salt, was no small matter. What others called chance he called fate.

At this time of day, and with documentary evidence before us, we have full reason to conclude that he was a much greater man than has been the custom of many to count him; and the struggle he made for the Cymry shows it. In the 'Mirror for Magistrates' is an account 'how Owen Glendower, seduced by false prophecies, tooke upon him to be Prince of Wales, and was by Henry, Prince of England, chased to the mountains, where he miserably died for want of food'; not true this, for, as we shall see, he died in peace. Hard words are, in this account of him, put into his mouth. With more justice, the love of the Welsh for ancestral pedigrees is girded at in many pithy sentences; such as

> Gentry consisteth not in lands and towers:
> Hee is a churle though all the world were his,
> Yea Arthur's heyre, if that he live amiss.
>
> For vertuous life a gentleman doth make
> Of her possessour bee hee poore as Job,
> Yea though no name of elder hee can take—
> For proofe take Merlin fathered by an hob.
> But who so sets his mind to spoyle and rob,
> Although he come by due descent from Brute,
> He is a chorle, ungentle, vile, and brute.

What he is made to say of himself in a mock is perfectly true, for never was man more beloved by the Cymry—miscalled rascally bare-footed people—than he.

> Then with my power I boldly came abroade,
> Taken in my country for a very god.

Shakespeare has made a very different use of that 'reliance

on ancient prophecies which was part of the national character, and of Glendower's own propensity ' than that which is made in this curious old poem of Thomas Phaer's :—

Ye crafty Welshmen, wherefore do ye mock
The noble men thus with your feyned rhymes?
Ye noble men, why fly ye not the flocke
Of such as have seduced so many times?
False prophecies are plagues for divers crimes
Which God doth let the devylish sort devise
To trouble such as are not godly wise.

The truth is that the prophecies of old days, in which Glendower had a true Welsh faith as strong as my old friend John Price's, inspired him on his way; and it is one of the strong points in Shakespeare, unmistakably Shakespearian, in which he alludes to them.

A word or two must be said of that celebrated scene in the room of the archdeacon's house at Bangor. No lover of Shakespeare would forgive its omission.

When Glendower tells Hotspur, his good cousin Hotspur, that as oft as Lancaster did mention his name his cheek looked pale,

'And with
A rising sigh he wisheth you in heaven.'

Hotspur's quick and characteristic reply is—

'And you in hell as often as he hears
Owen Glendower spoken of.'

To which the honest Welshman's answer is, fully believing in his fated mission, and as undaunted as Hotspur's self in his wildest moments—

'I cannot blame him; at my nativity
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burning cressets; and at my birth
The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shak'd like a coward.'

At which Hotspur mocks, as might be anticipated. Glendower, however, is not driven from the vantage ground of his belief, and adds presently—

'These signs have marked me extraordinary;
And all the courses of my life do show
I am not in the roll of common men.'

But the chief and well-known reply of Hotspur is in those words in which he addresses Mortimer, who is endeavouring to stop him crossing his father-in-law :—

> 'I cannot choose; sometimes he angers me
> With telling me of the mold-warp and the ant,
> Of the dreamer Merlin, and his prophecies;
> And of a dragon and a finless fish,
> A clip-wing'd griffin and a moulting raven,
> A couching lion and a ramping cat,
> And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
> As puts me from my faith.'

Then, again, as regards his education, that too was evidently the best of the day. Fortescue says he was brought up in the University of London, whilst old Westminsters claim him as a Westminster. At all events, he was called to the bar, as was then the custom, as we have seen before, with the first families of the day, and at no small cost. But probably he always retained the strong Welsh accent, which will elucidate his own and Hotspur's words :—

> *Glen.* I can speak English, lord, as well as you,
> For I was train'd up in the English court,
> Where, being but young, I framed to the harp
> Many an English ditty lovely well,
> And gave the tongue a helpful ornament—
> A virtue that was never seen in you.
> *Hot.* Marry, and I'm glad of it with all my heart;
> I had rather be a kitten and cry mew
> Than one of those same metre ballad-mongers;
> I had rather hear a brazen can'stick turn'd,
> Or a dry wheel grate on an axle-tree,
> And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
> Nothing so much as mincing poetry:
> 'Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag.

Thus we see at what a rate Hotspur held refinements and poetry. But it quite clears the matter as to Owen Glendower being an educated man; as Mortimer said—

> Exceedingly well read, and profited
> In strange concealments;

still alluding, no doubt, to his love of prophecies, and omens,

and dark superstitions, such as have ever been found lurking in mountainous districts.

Such was the Welsh chieftain, who proclaimed himself Prince of Wales, and had a far better title to that sovereignty than Henry IV. had to his; and he was a man who knew how to take a position and to hold it, and Shakespeare had cause to make him say—

> Three times hath Henry Bolingbroke made head
> Against my power; thrice from the banks of Wye
> And sandy-bottom'd Severn have I sent him
> Bootless home and weather-beaten back;

alluding, of course, to Henry's march against him in person, to the war of the elements set in array against him, and his defeat. So successful, indeed, was Owen Glendower that the popular belief was that he was aided by the powers of magic. Hence, in Shakespeare, Henry calls him

> That great magician, damn'd Glendower;

and Hardyng in his 'Chronicle,' says Turner, 'who lived at the time, gives us the general impression and his own' in the words which follow:—

> The kyng had never but tempest foule and raine
> As long as he was ay in Wales grounde;
> Rockes and mystes, windes and stormes certaine,
> All men trowed that *witches* it made that stounde.

Some said he had got hold of the stone of insensibility, or invisibility, said to have been Arundel's, and to have been lost by an old emir of Palestine. Some said he had the protection of Merlin sewed up in a bag; some said one thing and some said another, but *all* said—for it was clear and evident to the most determined gainsayers—that

> The irregular and wild Glendower

held a charmed life, which even a silver bullet from the cross-bow could not touch. Nothing could so well describe his habits as the line just referred to, for when the wild fit was on, and when his foot was on his native mountains, then was he

> Dark rolling like the ocean tide
> When the rough west hath chafed his pride,
> And his deep roar sends challenge wide
> To all that bars his way

Nothing strange was not said of Owen Glendower, but we are to recollect that the dirt thrown upon his name came chiefly from the favourers of Henry IV. Howel, the Welshman, told the priest of Hanwood that he did not believe a word about his near namesake Hoel, a relative of Glendower, whom he was 'said to have killed and to have hidden in a blasted tree.' It was all a lie, he said, to blacken the great chieftain's name.

I may mention here that there is no reason to believe that Glendower was starved to death in his own fortress. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that he was most tenderly looked after by one of his daughters. The most impulsive of men, he was yet the tenderest. The Cymry can still recount strange weird stories about him, as, I dare say, they did, and Mr. Borrow, though he has told us something, for want of space has not told us half; I in my day have heard many things when a wanderer on the dark-flowing Dee, among the Berwyns, and in the Carnarvonshire range; and I am not brought over to the opinion of Holinshed, who puts his death down as from starvation in 1409. 'He was living,' says the historian of Shrewsbury, 'six years later, but in a state of concealment, chiefly at the house of one of his daughters, married to a Herefordshire gentleman named Monington. In July 1415 the new king (Henry V.), anxious to have his country in tranquillity before he engaged in the war with France, offered a pardon to the Cambrian chieftain; and this would probably have been accepted by Glendower had not the negotiation been interrupted by his death, in the following September, in the sixty-first year of his age.'

The author of 'Glendower'—I know not his name—tells us that the churchyard of Monington claims to be honoured by his grave; but neither that humble sanctuary nor the track of his exile is polluted by the stain of rebellion; for the cause which Glendower adopted was purely legitimate. He laboured to restore, not to destroy, and died, as he had lived, a faithful adherent of a fallen king, to whom his first allegiance had been plighted, from whence he never for a moment swerved. In reading these volumes some years ago I was much struck with the author's knowledge of Owen Glendower's

localities, and on finishing them I ventured to put into his mouth the lines of Milman in his early poem of so great promise, never surpassed by anything he has ever written for power of conception—

> Henceforth finds fortune nowhere on this soul
> To fasten misery on; I laugh at fate,
> For I am past its wavering malice now.

'There can be no doubt,' said the Welshman Howel, under the shade of the Old Oak, 'that Owen Glendower must many a time have heard the baying of the *cwn annwn* (or the dogs of hell), or, as others called them, *cwn bendith eu mammau* (dogs of the fairies), or else *cwn wybir* (dogs of the sky); but their sound was not near, but far, far off, amid the rocks and the fastnesses. And though he was superstitious he would say, "They are not coming nigh me, their cry is too loud."' And the old priest of Hanwood smiled, for he thought within himself that Howel was a believer in the *cwn annwn*, of which he used to speak, almost in Macbeth's words, as

> The sightless couriers of the air.

And I called to mind those lines of Sophocles in the 'Œdipus Tyrannus'—

> ὥρα νιν ἀελλάδων
> ἵππων σθεναρώτερον
> φυγᾷ πόδα νωμᾶν.

I had, indeed, often heard myself in my boyhood of *cwn annwn*, and of the yethhounds of Devonshire; and in after days I coupled such superstitions with much other ancient folklore which I had picked up in Scandinavia. And at this moment I should like to read a book I have never seen but only heard of—the Rev. Edmund Jones' 'Relation of Ghosts and Apparitions which commonly appeared in the Principality of Wales,' published at Bristol in 1767.

Next to the fortunes of Owen Glendower, the chief interest my Talking Friend took in any matters of this day was in the battle of Shrewsbury; but previous to it, he said, for two or three years, the Welsh were always hovering about. The valley of the Rea, indeed, was never clear of them, and it was reported more than once that they intended an attack on the

Castle of Caus. Besides this, the Welsh had taken great offence at a statute, passed in 1400–1, in which it was declared that none having father or mother born in Wales was to purchase lands or tenements in divers towns, amongst others in Salop ; the evident intent of which was to get rid of all Welsh settlers. My Talking Friend always seemed to think that Howel the Welshman was used by his countrymen to gain information. Whether or not, he was much liked ; and, as it has been mentioned more than once before, the Old Oak and his time-honoured father were much attached to the Cymry.

But intermediate matters must be passed by, together with the quarrel of Glendower with the Lord Grey of Ruthin, and his sack of that town, which was the result of it. It is to this which Churchyard alludes in his ' Worthines of Wales,' so often referred to :—

> Whilst quarrel's rage did nourish ruynest wracke,
> And Owen Glendore set bloodie broyles abroach,
> Full many a towne was spoyled and put to racke,
> And cleane consumed, to countries' foul reproache ;
> Great castles raste, fayre buildings burnt to dust,
> Such revel raignde that men did live by luste.

Passing, however, all this by, it must suffice to state that after the defeat of the Scots, in 1402, at Hamildon Hill, by the Earl of Northumberland, and Harry Hotspur, his son, and on Henry's prohibiting them to ransom any of the prisoners, they took offence, and with the Earl of Worcester, the earl's brother, set Douglas at liberty, joined with Glendower, and determined to unthrone the usurper and canker, Henry Bolingbroke, who wished Percy, as ' sirrah,' to speak no more of Mortimer :—

> *Hot.* Speak of Mortimer ?
> Zounds ! I will speak of him ; and let my soul
> Want mercy if I do not join with him.
> Yea, on his part I'll empty all these veins,
> And shed my dear blood drop by drop i' the dust,
> But I will lift the down-trod Mortimer
> As high i' the air as this unthankful king,
> As this ingrate and canker'd Bolingbroke.

The Battle of Shrewsbury.

'This battle was fought,' says the chronicler John Stow, 'on Mary Magdalene's even' (that is to say, July 21, 1403), 'near unto Shrewsbury, in a place called Oldfield, *alias* Bulfield, not far from a place called Barwike'—the modern Berwick.

Of Hotspur's advance from the north, so long a march, it is not easy to speak; but we know that he was joined by the men of Cheshire—always ready combatants—and that it was the great object of the king to reach Shrewsbury before him. Neither, again, is there any reason to think that Hotspur could look for any assistance from the good people of Shrewsbury; they rather sided the other way, as we have seen before; 'but it was of the utmost importance that he should gain possession of a passage over that rapid river,' the 'sandy-bottomed Severn,' as Shakespeare calls it, which separated him from his ally, Owen Glendower, who was to meet him there or thereabouts; in fact, on the borders of Powis-land, which the sturdy Welshman, like a noble prince, still determined to hold, and with it the old town of Pengwerne, or the head of Powisa, included in that tripartite division which, as Shakespeare tells us, from the chroniclers, was made in the house of the archdeacon at Bangor. If not history, the lines are near to it:—

> *Glen.* Come, here's the map. Shall we divide our right
> According to our threefold order ta'en?
> *Mort.* The archdeacon hath divided it
> Into three limits very equally:
> England, from Trent and Severn hitherto,
> By south and east, is to my part assign'd;
> All westward, Wales beyond the Severn shore,
> And all the fertile land within that bound,
> To Owen Glendower; and, dear coz, to you
> The remnant northward, lying off from Trent.

For the appointed meeting of the Percies and the Earl of Worcester, and for the battle, of which my Talking Friend thought so much, and said so much, all old Shrewsbury boys, for whom these pages are specially intended, as referring to the old town and local history, are referred to the able

historians of Shrewsbury, where they will find an excellent account and a plan, or 'sketch, showing the conjectured position and march of the troops at the battle of Shrewsbury, July 20, 1403.' What pupil of dear old Bishop Butler's has not busied himself in tracing the old course of the river Severn? Who does not know of Cotton Hill, Gravel Hill, Cross Hill; of Battlefield, and Statelyfield, and the King's Croft; of Bullfield, and Great Berwick; of Almond Pool and its bald coots, of Almond Park and its squirrels? Who has not scrambled up Leaton Shelf, and climbed the old oak at Shelton, in those days unenclosed and unconfined in the open champaign? Even the little boy, in the lower school, fresh from the 'Heroides,' would trace the battle with his stick:—

Atque aliquis posita monstrat fera prælia mensa
Pingit et exiguo Pergama tota mero.
Hac ibat Simois: hic est Sigeïa tellus:
Hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis.
Illic Aeacides, illic tendebat Ulixes:
Hic lacer admissos terruit Hector equos.

As noticed before, the battle of Shrewsbury has swallowed up, or nearly so, all other names, though my Talking Friend said that the inhabitants of the valley of the Rea for many and long a year spoke of Bullfield and Berwickfield, Battlefield, and Statelyfield—names very well known to the Welshman Howel. In the days of our boyhood, indeed, none of those names was extinct; and the battle of Waterloo might be quoted as a case in point, it, like Shrewsbury, having usurped to itself all the other names connected with the fight.

'John atte Water, or Warled,' said my Talking Friend, 'was vicar of Wrockwardine in those days, and a great friend of, if not closely related to, the priest of Hanwood. It was when on a visit to the priest on the banks of the Rea, some time after, that he told him how he had been compelled to execrate the cruelties of Bolingbroke, and he implied that his treatment of the Douglas was mere policy. Being a kind-hearted merciful man, he could not away with the cruel beheadings that followed the battle at the High Cross, in Shrewsbury; where there fell in cold blood the Earl of

Worcester, Sir Theobald Trussel, and Sir Richard Vernon. The cruel and barbarous disinterment of the gallant Hotspur likewise left a deep stain, as he thought, on the escutcheon of Henry IV.'s name, which the foundation of the church at Battlefield could never wipe off.'

My Talking Friend added, 'John atte Water used to tell of the shudder that passed over Hotspur's frame when, on calling for his trusty and well-loved sword, he was told that it was left behind at Berwick. A soldier who was close by at the time, and was afterwards one of John's parishioners, let him know all about it; and he declared that Hotspur was one of the boldest-fronted warriors eye ever rested on. None could ever forget his bearing.'

What was by tradition said to be his tomb in St. Mary's Church, and known to all old Shrewsbury boys as Hotspur's tomb, really belonged to one of the Leyburne family at Berwick. Indeed, in Churchyard's words, in his 'Worthines of Wales,' we have these express words—'A knight lies cross-legged in St. Marie's; his name is Leybourne.' The Leyburne's were a very ancient Shropshire family, and from them Great Berwick was sometimes called Berwick Leyburne. The reader may pick up what is known about them from Archdeacon Owen's comprehensive account of the 'Ancient and Present State of Shrewsbury,' the pilot to the more extended labours of our well-known historians.

Much has been said of Henry's desire to have avoided the loss of his people's lives; and there is every reason to suppose, not only from Shakespeare, but from history, that he tried to do so. On speaking to my Talking Friend on the subject, he reported to me what he had heard both from the priest of Hanwood and from the vicar of Wrockwardine.

'Thomas Presbury was,' they said, 'at this time the mitred abbot of Shrewsbury, a very learned man, and twice Chancellor of Oxford; and he it was who was employed by Henry to negotiate with the rebels before the battle. John Prophete, also, the dean of St. Chad's, did all he could to mediate; and of both of them, save only in the matter of Wiclif, both the priest of Hanwood and the vicar of Wrockwardine spoke in the highest terms. All was, however, in vain, probably

owing to the stern, unbending temper of Worcester, and the cries of "ST. GEORGE!" and "ESPÉRANCE PERCY!" hastened on the bloody field of Shrewsbury.'

Before quitting the subject in hand, mention should be made of the old oak at Shelton, known so well to all old Shrewsbury boys; a sketch of which as it stood in 1822 is given by the historians of the good old town, to which all the country people talked of going in former days—with no reference to London at all—much like the neighbouring Greeks went ἐς τὴν πόλιν—that is, to Constantinople, or Byzantium, the modern name of *Stamboul*. In my boyhood, when I often ensconced myself within its trunk, it always went by the name of Owen Glendower's Oak; of it, and of the Cressage, or Christ's Oak, and of many other old oaks in the neighbourhood, my Talking Friend was much in the habit of speaking; reporting, too, that his time-honoured father remembered many oaks which served as boundaries; but he was unwilling to admit that there was anything traitorous in the conduct of Glendower. As we have seen before, he and his father had a great liking for the Cymry. Shelton, however, he would add, was no Welsh name—it pointed rather to the Danish invasion, and was derived from the *skaaler*, *shells*, or *shales*, which composed their booths or temporary residences. And I called to mind those at Thingveller, or Thingvaller, in Iceland, and I recollected that there were many Sheltons in England.

But the current report must be given, or our story would be incomplete.

It is said, then, that on the day, July 20, when the air rang with the war-cries of '*St. George!*' and '*Espérance Percy!*' the leader of the Welsh and their hope, the great chieftain of the day, Owen Glendower, had 'advanced as far as Shelton, on the opposite side of the Severn, where he awaited the issue of the contest, determined to recede or advance according to its event.' The constant tradition of the country is that he ascended '*the grette oake at Shelton*'—the identical oak we are speaking of—'so to gain by personal inspection the earliest intelligence of its event.' Whether there is any truth in this or not, it is clear that Owen Glendower was not inti-

midated by the defeat and death of Hotspur, for he continued to make constant raids into the English border. In the words of the historians so often referred to, 'These incursions were repeated in the following years, to the great injury of their town and neighbourhood; and in one of them eight townships in the liberties of Shrewsbury, on the side of Wales, the suburb called Franksville, and five hamlets—viz. Newton, Meole Bracy, Newbald and Eggebaldenham, Shelton, and Monk Meole—were destroyed by the marauding parties of Glendower, who carried his ravages to the gates of the Welsh bridge, and had even the audacity to overrun the country at least as far as the abbey of Buildwas, which he wasted with fire, so that the divine service was for a time discontinued, and the monks were reduced to the greatest poverty.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

A GOOD MAN.

Oderat hic urbes, nitidâque remotus ab aulâ
Secretos montes et inambitiosa colebat
Rura, nec Iliacos cœtus nisi rarus adibat.
OVID, *Met.* xi. 764.

What a pleasing variety is here of towns, rivers, hills, dales, woods, meadows, each of them striving to set forth the other, and all of them to delight the eye! I say this is no other than a natural and real landskip, drawn by that almighty and skilful Hand in this table of the earth for the pleasure of our view. No other creature but man is able to apprehend this beauty. I shall do wrong to Him that brought me hither if I do not feed my eyes and praise my Maker.—Bp. HALL, *Occasional Meditations*, V. 'Upon a Fair Prospect,' Ed. Fol. vol. ii. 119.

He long time,
Far from his home and from his native hills,
Had dwelt in bondage; and the mountain breeze,
Which he had with the breath of infancy
Inhaled, such impulse to his heart restored,
As if the season had rolled back, and life
Enjoyed a second spring.
Roderick, the Last of the Goths, vol. ix. 141.

My Talking Friend told me that after the battle of Shrewsbury many fugitives passed under his boughs on their way to Trê-Valdwyn, or Montgomery, and I had occasion to note more than once that whenever there was confusion in these parts, especially in Shrewsbury and the neighbourhood, escape lay by the valley of the Rea. A passage from the 'Life of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury' has been referred to in an earlier chapter, which spoke of the 'outlaws and thieves' of Montgomery; and to these, no doubt, the fugitives attached themselves.

Their way would be by Radbrook, Monk Meole, Newton, Edgbolt, Hanwood, Cruck Meole, Cruckton, Short Hill, the Lea, Hinton, Pontesford, Pontesbury, Snailbach, Minsterley, and Worthen; and no doubt, as rough people do, they would

leave marks of desolation behind them. And so my Talking Friend stated them to have done, adding ludicrously that the spirits of the mines at Snailbach were said to have made such noises underground that they protected the miners and their small possessions. In flight, however, they thought they saw safety and deliverance—to be taken was death.

The chief point I was enabled to pick out from my Talking Friend's report of the flight from Shrewsbury after the battle was the improved condition of the whole of this district; for he spoke of cattle and sheep being driven from these pastures, and of injury done to standing crops of wheat, barley, oats, peas, and beans; so that the woodland must have decreased considerably. And this reminds me that at the time of the battle of Shrewsbury the peas were ripe. The reader may like to see the note which follows in our so often quoted historians.

'*Oportebat regis exercitum, si pugnare vellet, accedere super aream satam pisis adultis: quas pisas ita nexuerant et ligaverant ut impedimento forent accedentibus prætensi laquei eorundem.* OTTERBOURNE. It was exactly the expedient of Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite (2 Sam. xxiii. 11); and such an impediment must have been invaluable to Hotspur in the situation in which he found himself, and in the absence of all hedges behind which to make a stand; for these were not known in England at the period with which we are now concerned.'

On which I may add that the *haiæ* and *hagæ* of 'Domesday' were very different indeed from our modern hedges, though they were inclosures. The Haygate, near Wellington, may have been the entrance to the forest of the Wrekin. '*The Hays*,' '*The Haigh*,' &c., are by no means uncommon names in England. In Mr. Ellis' words, 'Beasts were caught by driving them into a hedged or paled part of a wood or forest, as elephants are in India, or deer in North America. This is the haia.'

Such were the old haiæ, but nothing like our modern hedges; and of these more than one was within the boundaries of the Stiperstone Forest, which might be seen from the Old Oak's topmost boughs. The *Hayes* Coppice, in the neigh-

bourhood bears testimony to the old '*pale*,' or '*parle*,' of a forest in a hunting district. The Irish '*pale*' pointed the same way, and the still more recent '*pale*' of Madras. And perhaps wherever there is a '*pale*' it implies advancement in civilisation in early times. Certainly, as my Talking Friend said, wherever there was a '*hayes*' in Shropshire cultivation was on the advance, and improvement sure. At this very time the fields were called the harrisels—and, indeed, all the fields between Hanwood and Cruck Meole were very valuable pasture land. On the Cruckton side there was wood enough, and so there was on the Arlescott side; but the Rea valley just referred to, between the two close adjoining villages, was an open champaign. He was but what Phineas Fletcher calls, in his 'Purple Island,' an

Hæreticus, a wrangling carle,

who could have found fault with a spot so fascinating and so lovely. So soft was the sound of the rippling waters, and so lulling the motion of the leaves as they murmured in the breeze, making music for all the senses, that, as Southey says in 'Madoc'—

A blind man would have loved the lovely spot.

On the banks of the Rea, and in a curious old timber house, there lived in those days an ancient Saxon family, called Watyr, Watur, or Warter—as some thought, from their proximity to the stream, *de aquâ*—or, as others imagined, as the branches were connected, from the village of Warter, in Yorkshire—the Delgoritia of the 'Itinerary,' about four and a half miles from Pontefract, and some fifteen from York, to the north-east. It was, indeed, owing to the connection that existed between the families that old John del Watur migrated from Yorkshire, somewhere about the year 1404, and became a thriving and respected burgess of Shrewsbury. In old deeds connected with the Trusbut family, to which their names are attached, the spelling occurs under the form of Watre and Wart, that is, Warter. But so it is—

Time doth efface
Each day some lingering trace
Of human government and human case.

The connection of old John del Watur with the Cruck Meole branch is not clear, and it has been said that he came to Shrewsbury, claiming an inheritance there as a younger son in copyhold; a like custom to which is one amongst the 'Customs of Kent,' alluded to by old Lambarde under the name of '*Astre*.' The passage being curious, and the old black-letter copy rare, I will transcribe it: 'For, as of ancient time, there ought to be granted to the eldest the first choice after the division, so to the part of the youngest there ought to be allotted in the division that part of the messuage which our treatise calleth *Astre*, that is to say, the stock, hearth, or chimney for fire; which word, as I think, was derived of the Latin *astrum*, a star, because the fire shineth on the house, though it be not now commonly understood in Kent; yet do they of Shropshire and other parts retain it in the same signification till this day.' Under whatever circumstances, and whether with an eye to an inheritance or not, here old John del Watur came, and his family left a name behind them never to be forgotten in Shrewsbury.

My Talking Friend said that the old man, together with his sons, frequently came to Cruck Meole; that they were fond of the angle, and loved the banks of the Rea, and that he belonged to one of the early fraternities, or guilds, of the old town.

On which it may be noted, though some reference has been made to the subject before, that what has become a marked feature in our times, under the phases of clubs, unions, brotherhoods, Oddfellows, Foresters, *et hoc genus omne*, is but what our northern neighbours would call 'a new clout on an old horn.' We have but to turn to our archives and the records of the past, and we find that our forefathers had their fraternities and their guilds, their hansas and their companies. They had, moreover, more of a religious sense and feeling attached to them; for although we *auspicate* our common clubs with the daily service and a sermon, it cannot be said that there is much solemnity in such meetings. The heathen's lines would suit them exactly:—

> Dî quoque, ut à cunctis hilari pietate colantur,
> Tristitiam poni per sua festa jubent.

The historians of Shrewsbury refer to Sir Edwin Sandys' remarks on the invention of spiritual fraternities and the policies of the papacy against the opposites. They are to be found in his *Europæ Speculum* or, 'A Relation of the Religion used in the West Parts of the World'; and he then states that they perhaps equal, if they do not exceed, in number the very orders of the friars. To which he adds—evidently not being aware of, or else forgetting, our old Saxon customs and institutions—'These fraternities are not yet growne into any great request in other places, howbeit in *Italie* they have so multiplied that few (especially of that vulgar and middle sort of men, who affect any reputation of devotion) but have entered into some one of them, and sundry into many; the assurance of them unto papacie must needs be doubled, since love groweth according to the proportion of hope.'

Two at least of these fraternities there were in Shrewsbury, one of later date, founded in honour of St. Winifrede by Abbot Mynde in 1486; another much earlier, for we find that to it, 'the Fraternity of St. Mary,' as it was called, Thomas de la Clyve, town clerk, bequeathed a legacy of two shillings in the year 1336. With this latter, two reigns later, the Guild of Drapers was incorporated, and to the Drapers' Company it was that old John del Watur attached himself; a company long in existence before it was honoured with a royal charter, keeping pretty close in its hands the wools and the flannels and the knittings of Wales. With his old friend, Matthew Whitfield of Whitfield, who was sheriff of Northumberland in 1433, and who never acquiesced in his moving so far south, old John del Watur kept up his intimacy to the last, and was in the habit of sending him an annual present of what would now be called *flannel*. Some, indeed, still assert that the word is derived from the Welsh *gwlanen*, and that from *gwlân*, wool. When Shakespeare makes Falstaff say, in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' 'Am I ridden with a Welsh goat too? Shall I have a coxcomb [*i.e.* a fool's cap] of frize?' the allusion is to cloths for which the Welsh were so famous. In his melancholy plight it was time for him to say of Sir Hugh Evans, the Welsh parson, 'I am not able to answer the *Welsh flannel!*'

From all that my Talking Friend said it was quite clear to me that old John del Watur belonged to what was afterwards called the Drapers' Company; and he added that the poor people of Cruck Meole and Hanwood were seldom ill-clad in winter. No doubt the good man made a return for hospitalities received—for his pleasant summer's fishing on the banks of the Rea—for the songs of the birds and the murmur of the waters over those peaceful shallows which the very minnows did love so well. He was a man to have apostrophised the Rea as it flowed onwards, and to have said—

> Let no man dare
> To spoil thy fish, make loch or weir;
> But on thy margent still let dwell
> Those flowers which have the sweetest smell;
> And let the dust upon thy strand
> Become like Tagus' golden sand;
> Let as much good betide to thee
> As thou hast favour show'd to me.

In every relation of life he seems to have been a good and a kindly man, and to have left an excellent name behind him. I greatly suspect that his religious views were in advance of many of his countrymen, and that he supported the teaching of Wiclif. Very probably he might have been influenced also by the preaching of William Thorpe, whose 'Examination,' penned by his own hand, is extant in Foxe's 'Acts and Monuments.'

Any peculiar views and doctrines that William Thorpe may have held were probably of very little weight with old John del Watur, but it was the spread of God's word and of the everlasting Gospel he looked to; and nothing so likely as that so earnest a preacher, and of the same county also, as it has been surmised, and as my Talking Friend reported, should have attracted the notice of a deep-thinking man. 'To the text of the story,' says Foxe, 'we have neither added nor diminished; but as we have received it copied out and corrected by Master William Tindal (who had his own handwriting), so we have here sent it and set it abroad.'

Of Thorpe's being cast into prison here, and of his afterwards being taken to Lambeth, it is not necessary to speak

here ; but his reply to the question of the archbishop on the subject of the sacrament of the altar ought not to be omitted :—

'And the archbishop took the certification in his hands and looked thereon a while, and then he saide to me, "Loe, here it is certified against thee, by worthy men and faithful of Shrewesburie, that thou preachest there openlie, in St. Chad's Church, that the sacrament of the aultar is material bread after the consecration. What saiest thou ? was this truelie preached ? "

'And I said, "Sir, I tell you truelie that I touched nothing there of the sacrament of the aultar but in this wise, as I will, with God's grace, tell you here. As I stood there in the pulpit, busying me to teach the commandment of God, there knelled a sacring bell, and therefore mickle people turned away hastilie, and with noise ran for towards me. And I, seeing this, said to them thus : 'Good men, ye were better to stand here still and to heare God's word ; for, certes, the vertue and meede of the most holie sacrament of the aultar standeth mickle more in belief thereof ye ought to have in your souls than it doth in the outward sight thereof. And therefore ye were better to stand still quietlie to hear God's worde, because that through the hearing thereof men come to very true beleefe.' And otherwise, sir, I am certain I spake not there of the worthie sacrament of the aultar."'

Greater men than old John del Watur were influenced by Wiclif and the Lollards, as they now began to be called. John of Gaunt, as we have seen, was of that party, and it has been thought that Henry IV. himself, till his interests lay another way, was not unswayed. Be this as it may, what Churchyard says of Shrewsbury under a later date was certainly true of it now, as far as we are enabled to pick out from existing documents :—

> Most part are ritch or els right wel to live,
> And to the poore the godly people give ;
> To preaching stil repayres both young and old,
> Makes more thereof than of ritch pearls and gold.

Not improbably there was a good deal of mixed and indiscriminate charity in those days. At all events, so great

was the multitude of Irish beggars—'*chamber deacons*' the Old Oak called them, and the name still remains in documentary annals—that in the year 1413 they were ordered to depart the kingdom before the feast of All Souls. This notice to quit was common enough in old days, and on this principle, I suppose—

> Vulneris id genus est, quod cum sanabile non sit,
> Non contrectari tutius esse puto.

Nothing more, apparently, is known of John del Watur, except that he busied himself with his sons, Degory, Richard, John, and William, for the good of the town. All of them were burgesses in the year 1404, the 6th of Henry IV., and all seem to have passed and repassed continually between Cruck Meole and the old town—so my Talking Friend assured me, speaking at the same time of the great simplicity of their lives. It would appear, too, that they were all anglers, and perhaps, like Alexander Nowel, dean of St. Paul's, in troublous times escaped many anxieties, if not some dangers, in their quiet sport. The reader is referred to a pithy passage on this subject, quoted from Izaak Walton, in Churton's delightful 'Life of Nowel.' I will only add, 'The good old man, though he was very learned, yet, knowing that God leads us not to heaven by many nor by hard questions, like an honest angler, made that good, plain, unperplexed Catechism which is printed with our good old Service Book.'

It is rough men who turn the gentle art into roughness; and hence it was that Phineas Fletcher, in his 'Piscatory Eclogues,' made Chromis say--

> But when the fisher's trade, once highly priz'd
> And justly honoured in those better times,
> By every lozel-groom I see despised,
> No marvel if I hate my jocund rhimes,
> And hang my pipe upon a willow bough;
> Might I grieve never if I grieve not now.

It was said above that old John del Watur belonged to what was afterwards called the Guild, or Company, of the Drapers. It was, however, his son Degory Watur, who left a name behind him more especially connected with that ancient

and honourable society. I cannot do better than give our well-known historians' account :—

'We hear nothing more of "The Fraternity, or Brotherhood, of the Trinity of St. Mary," though it probably subsisted as a voluntary society until 1461, when Edward IV. incorporated the drapers of Shrewsbury by the name of *A Fraternity or Guild of the Holy Trinity of the Men of the Mystery of Drapers of the Town of Salop*; and then the old *parochial fraternity* of members of *both sexes* appears to have been united to this *commercial guild* of *men* alone, for it is certain that the brethren and *sisters* of the fraternity were to be prayed for by *the poor persons of St. Mary's Almshouses*, of which, therefore, we must now speak.

'This benevolent foundation was the work of DEGORY WATUR, a worthy draper of Shrewsbury, third son of John del Watur, and admitted a burgess of the town in 1404, 6 Henry IV., together with his father and his brothers, Richard, John, and William. How soon he conceived a design of devoting a part of his substance to charitable purposes does not appear, but on October 1, 1444 (23 Henry VI.), we find him receiving a licence from John Burdet, bachelor in degrees, dean of the Free Royal Chapel of St. Mary of Salop, to the Court of Rome immediately pertaining, authorising him and the said Degory and others (not named) to build in the western side of the cemetery, but beyond the limits of the procession thereof, a certain almshouse, 106½ feet long and 12½ feet wide, for the habitation of thirteen poor persons of both sexes, who should pray for their founder, Watur by name.'

All this, however, is to be referred to a later date than that of which we are now treating. It may be well, nevertheless, to throw together the few incidents of this good man's life.

It appears that he sided with the Yorkists, and that the Fraternity of the Trinity became identified with their fortunes. Degory, indeed, seems to have possessed the resolute determination of his Saxon blood, for at a very advanced age, and when blind by God's visitation so that he could not labour, he expelled the Countess Dowager of Shrewsbury and her confederate Alan Sturge from the lands of the Drapers' Com-

pany, which they had seized and appropriated to their own uses, or intended to do so.

From this time till that of his death he seems to have had no further disturbance in his charitable and useful works. He survived six years longer, and must have died close upon the age of ninety, and, as he stated in his will, 'of good mind and perfect memory.' As was natural, he first looked to his own flesh and blood, and then, according to the notions of the times, to rites of holy Church, by the establishment of a chantry priest, honest and virtuous, to celebrate in the Leybourne Chapel, above referred to, for the salvation of his soul; providing, at the same time, sufficient sustenance for the almshouses he had founded. And a pleasant thing it is to read in the MS. chronicle quoted by the historians of Shrewsbury that until the day of his death he 'dwellyd in the almeshowse hall there amongst the poor, and wold also kneel amongst them in the churche in a fayre longe pewe made for them and hym selfe.' A portrait of the good old man still remains in the Drapers' Hall.

It has been surmised that this ancient worthy of the old town, and the piety of the drapers as a body, excited the parishioners of St. Mary's 'to raise the walls of their side aisles, to crown their nave with a clerestory, and to cover it with the most richly carved timber roof; and the style of architecture of the respective parts warrants all these conjectures.' Whether so or not, it is a noble fabric, beloved by every old Shrewsbury boy, who regrets the Sundays he will have passed within its walls irreverently, as boys will, but who, when they become men, repent them of opportunities lost.

Very pleasing was it, no doubt, to old Degory Watur, with his religious turn of mind and thought, to look upon the time-honoured churches of our old town—the *ἐς τὴν πόλιν*, or the *Stamboul* of the county—with its spires now probably rising and pointing towards heaven—rising, at least, in height, for if St. Mary's spire, like that of Salisbury, dates from the fourteenth century, it was certainly heightened afterwards. The basement of the tower, of red stone, now much corroded by the weather, like St. Mary Redcliff at Bristol, shows itself to be of much earlier date than that of the spire; nor am I

aware that there is any existing proof of the exact date of its erection. Most spires are of the early decorated style; early English are not so common. Fergusson is inclined to think 'that the spire, properly so called, is an invention from the banks of the Rhine.' The emblem of the celebrated Christian Scriver, minister of Magdeburg, shows that the Elbe had its spires likewise. It is in the collection to which he gave the title of '*Gottholdt's Emblems*,' from the real or fictitious name of a beloved fellow-pilgrim. 'GOTTHOLDT, seeing in a certain town the church spires mounting almost to the clouds, began to wonder that our forefathers had expended so much industry and wealth upon an object which seems to minister to nothing but superfluous pomp and outward show. After some reflection, however, he remarked that their intentions were certainly good, and their object praiseworthy. Does not, he said, such a tall and stately spire seem like a giant figure pointing upwards to the skies? Nor can we doubt that our worthy ancestors meant that the spire of every church should direct our eyes to heaven, thereby admonishing us that the doctrine preached in the sanctuary below is the only way to the mansions above. As often, then, as we see such a spire let us recollect that '*here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come*' (Heb. xiii. 14).

Did any such thoughts as those chase through old Degory's mind? This cannot be asserted. But his works which followed him tell us that he did what he could in his day—kneeled and sat pleasantly in his old pew at St. Mary's, and left, as my Talking Friend repeated constantly, a good name behind him. And I bethought me of St. Jerome's words to Julianus: '*Apostoli gloriantur quod omnia dimiserint, et sequuti sint Salvatorem; et certi præter retia et navem nihil legimus eos dimisisse, et tamen testimonio futuri judicis coronantur. Quia se offerentes, totum dimiserint quod habebant.*' From what we have, not from what we have not, are our spiritual measures and proportions to be taken. Of old Degory Watur it is enough to say what Hearne said of his friend Leonard Calvert, 'He was as well beloved as an angel could be in his station.' Even the little children were not forgotten by him, for when he provided lights for Corpus

Christi days, whatever else might be omitted at the mummery —as he had inclination to call portions of these shows—he always wished that there should be plenty of saffron and love-bread for them ; and till this day the simnels of Shrewsbury are seasoned with it.

It was a saying of the renowned Bishop Andrews that 'when we have means to help ourselves, God's omnipotency is for the time discharged.' So, no doubt, thought this 'worthy burgeis and reccantz' householder when he did his best, humbly, and truly, and faithfully, in that situation of life in which God had placed him.

Whereupon—for it was a warm and a lovely summer's eve —I sat me down beneath the boughs of my Talking Friend, and as his leaves rattled musically above my head I fell into a reverie of thought, evidently induced by dwelling on the charitable works of this good founder of St. Mary's Almshouses, and I said within myself—

'Though we cannot all of us be great, yet, by God's help, we may all of us be good, and charitable, and benevolent. Only let us set our hearts upon working out His righteousness and He will give us more grace, and our goodness shall be more than a habit. Perhaps if we were cautiously to analyse and lay before us in its parts the greatest good we have ever known wrought upon the earth we should be surprised at the smallness of the means.' And very beautifully is this illustrated in a figure by these verses in Proverbs, well conned, no doubt, by good old Degory: '*The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.*' And doth the God of the spirits of all flesh take thought for ants, and conies, and locusts, and spiders ; and shall not man, of whom He said, '*Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness,*' fulfil his trust, and rise up to the object of his creation ? Depend upon it, he who does no good in his generation is an unwise son. He seems to mar the image of his Maker when he strives not to help his fellow men ; when he saith not, on beholding sick and suffering folk, '*Yea!*

because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.'

Let it be well and clearly understood that man never approaches nearer to the Son of Man—manifest in the flesh, and walking as a man amongst men—than when he goes out in the face of his brethren to do good to them, to succour, if not to heal, their infirmities; and it is not necessarily the great lords and high estates of the realm who do the most—far from it. The good God, many a time and oft, layeth hold upon one that is the smallest in his Father's house—perchance to outward appearance the meanest, like worthy old Degory Watur—to work out great acts.

To take an instance or two from the midst of our own people.

Rahere, minstrel of Henry I., founded the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, in Smithfield, A.D. 1123; and Edward Alleyne, the player, in A.D. 1614, founded the 'College of God's Gift,' at Dulwich. But who, at such hands, and without consideration, would have looked for such things? Methinks that many may have narrowly eyed the minstrel and the player, saying, as '*the children of Belial said*' of Saul, '*How shall this man save us? And they*,' whose hearts God had not touched, '*despised him, and brought him no presents.*' And so it comes about that if we will look to the greatest charities of this or of other lands, we may find them to have been founded and established very frequently by men of whom the great world knew little, though in some sense they were its greatest men. I could name a long string of instances, and I need not be ashamed to do it, of holy and humble-minded men, like old Degory Watur, at whom the outer world would perchance have sneered, who nevertheless built almshouses, and homes, and retreats, still bearing their names, and still providing for the sufferings of humanity, whilst the names of kings and kaisers, powers and potentates are but a lesson and learnt by rote. '*A little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds*'—the poor patriarch's present in the stress of famine—were of more worth in their hands, because they did '*justly*,' and loved '*mercy, and walked humbly with their God*,' than '*thousands of rams and ten*

thousands of rivers of oil.' Theirs was not the too common modern fashion of sounding a trumpet before them, as though to say, '*Come and see my zeal for the Lord,*' and doing nothing unless their names were to be made a talk of or printed on a list. No fashion this of theirs. They did good by stealth, and the posterities have not failed to call them Benefactors.

Opportunity lost is grieved over for ever! And I never could read the passage following, from the First Book of Samuel, without considering the happy providence which threw the famished Egyptian into David's way, and *his* happiness in availing himself of it; for by helping the poor hunger-bitten wretch in his greatest need he not only saved him, but the people also out of the hands of the marauders, the Amalekites. It is one of those simply beautiful passages one never forgets: '*And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights.*'

How such a passage as this must have delighted old Degory Watur! Depend upon it, when '*the people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness*' of this world, he is a privileged and a happy man who has the will and the heart to go forth from his place and help them, so that one might say, '*They that were hungry ceased.*' He worketh not a miracle, as his Lord and Saviour did; for prophecy is the only remaining miracle to us; but he goeth about doing good as He did, and whosoever so doth, out of pure heart fervently, is blessed in his deed, and the Lord from out of Sion shall as surely bless him as He did that woman who brake the alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on His head; for He said of the good work she had wrought—

'SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD.'

As has been frequently observed, my Talking Friend's knowledge was very limited, however great his local information; and it was little he had heard about the questions

which had arisen between the commons and the clergy, and that great step in advance that every benefice should have a perpetual vicar. The truth, as we now know, is that, although Richard witnessed the rise of Wiclif, and John of Gaunt supported him, Henry's views were enlisted on the opposite side, and he supported the Church of Rome.

Of the insurrection under Scrope, Archbishop of York, and Thomas Mowbray, Earl Marshal, in which they were joined by the Earl of Northumberland, whom Henry had pardoned after Hotspur's death, my Talking Friend had heard something from the priest of Hanwood, as this was the first instance in England of capital punishment inflicted on a bishop, whence, as Hume puts it, 'the clergy of that rank might learn that their crimes, more than those of laics, were not to pass with impunity.' It is well known that the leprosy in his face, from which he died, is supposed to have been a judgment upon him for his desecration of the archbishop's mitre. He was likewise attacked with epileptic fits. Hence the Earl of Warwick says in Shakespeare—

> Be patient, princes; you do know these fits
> Are with his highness very ordinary.
> Stand from him, give him air; he'll straight be well.

Presently afterwards, confounding the medical terms, Prince Humphrey says:—

> This *apoplex* will certain be his end.

It was one of these last seizures which gave rise to the well-known scene in Shakespeare also, in which, according to the ancient custom of the Merovingian kings, who had their armours placed by their side when dying, Henry says:—

> Set me the crown upon my pillow here.

Sharon Turner gives the account of it, or, as he calls it, 'the simpler detail' from the contemporary historian Monstrelet, quoting him as good authority. In all probability there is substantial truth in the narrative under circumstantial evidence. But whether so or not, all English readers will still turn to that favourite passage in which

Prince Henry, afterwards Henry V., speaks to the crown as having sense, and thus upbraids it :—

> The care on thee depending
> Hath fed upon the body of my father ;
> Therefore, thou, best of gold, art worst of gold.
> Other, less fine in carat, is more precious,
> Preserving life in medicine potable ;
> But thou, most fine, most honour'd, most renown'd,
> Hast eat thy bearer up.

Of this period my Talking Friend remembered no more.

CHAPTER XXX.

SAXON AND NORMAN.

Trust me, I see the cage doth some birds good;
And if they do not suffer too much wrong
Will teach them sweeter descants than the wood.
WITHER'S *Shepherd's Hunting*, 'The First Eclogue.'

As waters have their course, and in their place
Succeeding streams well out, so is man's race:
The name doth still survive, and cannot die
Until the channels stop or springs grow dry.
BROWNE'S *Britannia's Pastorals*, second Song.

Cowell says: '*Mansura* and *masura* are used in "Domesday" and other ancient records for *mansiones vel habitacula villicorum*. In the "Survey," tom. i. fol. 3, there are said to have been three hundred and eighty three *mansuræ* in Sandwich, and in Shrewsbury a hundred and ninety-three *mansuræ* occur.'—ELLIS, *General Introduction to 'Domesday,'* vol. i. 244, *note*.

It was an ancient house fast by the river's side,
A very ancient but a homely dwelling,
Known to all wayfarers as an open one—
To the Cymry, and the Saxon, and the Norman:
All these had shared in its hospitality,
Journeying on their way to Pengwerne, on the Severn,
From old Trê-Valdwyn. None could ever say
They did not find a hearty welcome there!
MS. Poem.

'THE real aboriginal architecture of this country,' said Lord Palmerston in the debate on the Foreign Office, 'was mud huts and wicker wigwams. These were the original styles of those who first inherited this land.' And if the early homesteads of Britain were but lowly structures—wigwams, if you like, or loghouses thatched with reeds—those of the time we are now speaking of were none of the grandest, at least in out-of-the-way places like Cruck Meole or Cruckton, on the banks of the Rea. And if Wilfred, even at York, substituted lead for thatch in the stone cathedral,

which had succeeded the wooden church, we may readily suppose that reedy thatch was the usual shealing or covering of all *housen* (as they were called) hereabouts.

Not much dissimilar was Gunnar's house in the Burnt Njal. It was made 'all of wood, and roofed with beams above; and there were window-slits under the beams that covered the roof, and they were filled with shutters.' Evidently it was a house of the better class, for wood (except drift-wood) in Iceland must have been uncommon.

With us, however, it was the reverse; and the British wicker, which preceded wood and log work, in a great measure, was always notorious. To say nothing of the far-celebrated Iona, founded by Columba in A.D. 563, our own Glastonbury, the glory of the West, was, as William of Malmesbury tells us, but a sorry wattle structure at the first. The reeds of Avalon supplied all immediate necessities—'the isle of ancient Avalon,' the 'beauteous Avalon,' as Drayton calls it in the 'Polyolbion.'

Mr. Tristram, that energetic explorer of the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, says of Beni Isquen: 'As soon as any man having in his father's lifetime come to years of discretion, and taken to himself a wife, wishes to build a house, he sends the negro crier round the city, and on a fixed day every male inhabitant is compelled to convey to the site three stones fit for building, free of cost.' Our forefathers hardly wanted so much. 'Why,' said Caractacus in his captivity, 'why do you so greedily desire our poor cottages when you have such stately and magnificent palaces?'

Many years previous to the date of this chapter, a modern writer tells us, Henry II. kept his Christmas at Dublin with politic splendour. A palace had been built for him of wood and wicker work; the counterpart, on a larger scale, of the palaces of Irish chiefs; and in its skilful and graceful inter-texture he might admire the cunning of hand with which his new subjects were endowed.

Dr. Hook, the Dean of Chichester, is always a fresh writer, and the illustration following seems to me to be a very good one. 'The best idea, perhaps, of the Court of an Anglo-Saxon king is that which we may have derived from a visit

to the camp at Aldershot. There was the same rude discomfort commingled with the pomp and circumstance of war, with symptoms, beneath the surface, of refinement and taste. Anything more comfortless than an officer's hut we can scarcely imagine; and from the guttering candles on the table, we can understand how important to the accurate admeasurement of time must have been the horn lanthorns of Alfred.' The same might have been said of Addiscombe, dear to all old Indian officers. It was a place for hardening and discipline; and it is a thousand pities it was ever parted with for paltry, peddling thirty pieces of silver.

In the early days we are speaking of even 'wall clothes,' as they were afterwards called—that is to say, arras and tapestry—were comparatively a scarce and seldom luxury, only to be found in the houses of the great and in progresses. Archbishop Becket was a person to use 'wall clothes' when he visited his brethren in the old home at West Tarring, in Sussex, still called his Place; but such material was not common in Henry II.'s days. A Flagellant and the wearer of a flax shirt, Becket was not a man who despised the sweet wines of France and Italy; and 'wall clothes,' when the east wind cut keenly, were not distasteful.

I may add here, on the authority of Lord Macaulay, that as late as 1698 the English factory at Archangel was but a 'rude and mean building. The walls consisted of trees laid one upon another, and the roof was of birch bark.'

But to pass on to the old homestead on the Rea side.

Formerly, in Saxon times—for it was there before the Conquest—it was, as handed down by report, simply a wood or log house covered with reeds, and around it were wattled and wicker byres and folds into which the cattle were driven, and occasionally the swine, when the busy time of pannage was over, and the woods had yielded all the sustenance they could. Close by it—its boundary, in fact, on one side—flowed the Rea, whose course has been described in an earlier chapter, and not far off was the Cruckton Brook, which supplied the reeds the Rea did not. At that time, as has also been stated, both these streams were full of fish, but specially of trout, fed by the shoals of minnows there; and in the early

May, by their favourite fly, which arose from the shallows in myriads. A proof of the vast abundance of fish was that notwithstanding their wolfish propensities and voracity the pike, those 'dispeoplers of the lake,' as Gray calls them in his 'Rural Sports,' never kept the trout under. And, as for eels, large rents might have been paid by them, as so often recorded in 'Domesday.' Here, however, two mills only paid a certain number of *stickes*, each *sticke* containing twenty-five. The demand was made on the fall of the leaf, at the first flood. Such was the home and its locality in early days; and even then, situated on the wayside, it was known for its hospitality, and it had many hereditary guests amongst the Cymry, as they worked their way down from the Welsh mountains towards Pengwerne. The Saxon also learnt not to be afraid, and we are reminded of the words in Cymbeline—

> Fair youth, come in,
> Discourse is heavy, fasting; when we've supp'd
> We'll mannerly demand thee of thy story,
> So far as thou wilt speak it.

It was, indeed, an old hospitality that was kept up here; and there was a welcome, if but a homely one, for every wayfarer; and the old Saxon adage was kept up, 'Two nights have a guest, three nights own home.' It is a low view, which seems to have descended from the Norman intruders, that fish and friends only keep three days, and it has descended to our times in some old monkish Latin verse:—

> Verum dixit anus, quod piscis olet triduanus,
> Ejusdem more simili fœtet hospes odore.

For these lines I have lost the reference, but I should indeed be sorry if I ever forgot those beautiful lines in Homer in which he speaks of Axylus, the friend of mankind, as living in a house, like the old homestead on the Rea, by the wayside:—

> ὃς ἔναιεν ἐϋκτιμένῃ ἐν Ἀρίσβῃ,
> Ἀφνειὸς βιότοιο, φίλος δ' ἦν ἀνθρώποισι·
> Πάντας γὰρ φιλέεσκεν, ὁδῷ ἔπι οἰκία ναίων.

Certainly when one considers the hospitality of old times, one is apt to conclude that the rudeness of our forefathers'

dwellings was in a great measure made up for by the openness of their hands and of their hearts; and it is a pithy saying and a good one, that of Sir Thomas Browne in his 'Christian Morals': 'Be charitable before wealth makes thee covetous, and lose not the glory of the mite.'

But we must pass on from Saxon times, and passing by all intermediate changes we will venture to describe the old home and homestead, as it was about the time when old Degory Watur, Warter, or *De Aquâ*, came from the village of Warter, in Yorkshire, to Shrewsbury, and founded the almshouses at St. Mary's; for it was at this time, as my Talking Friend told me, that his father and his brothers first visited Cruck Meole, claiming kinship with its old, time-honoured inhabitants, and going and returning as it suited their convenience. Very happy days were those, said the Old Oak, for if there was trouble in the country, owing to the factions of princes, there was home-peace owing to the simple habits of the people. It was the venerable priest of Hanwood who said of the pleasant intercommunication which then existed between the rich draper and the contented yeoman—

> Non ego, securæ biberes si pocula Lethes,
> Excidere hæc credam pectore posse tuo.

In these days the home was greatly improved, though according to modern notions it was a very simple and homely affair, only to be compared, indeed, to some of the old farmsteads which were yet to be seen in Schleswig and Holstein within my own recollection, and within that of many yet living and mourning over the scourge of war which has swept over the some time happy realm of Denmark with the besom of destruction.

On approaching the lane from the Montgomery Road you saw at once that it was closed in and surrounded by buildings, except on one side where it was bounded by the stream. For the most part these buildings were thatched, even yet, with reeds from the Cruckton Brook and with straw. Parts of the home itself, however, appeared to be covered with a sort of shingled stone, like the thin slabs still common in the country, slate not being generally introduced

till a much later date; and as the shealing was dotted over with grey and yellow lichen, and clumps of house-leeks (without which, in those days, no home was thought to be sufficiently protected, whether from divers maladies or from thunder), it is clear it must have been there for some time.

But to get at the old home you had to pass through what would now be called a farmyard, through the midst of which ran what the old Romans called a '*calcetum*,' or a causeway, in which is retained the old name of caux, or cause, so well known in the neighbourhood from Caux Castle, and from the old causeway, near Ford.

Once arrived at the home, there was before it an old rude oak-wrought portico, 'which antiquaries in your days,' interposed my Talking Friend, 'would have given their eyes to see, and which you only see now and then in these days as an old church porch. Oak in those days was not scarce, and each timber seemed a load of itself. Here it was, in summer evenings, that the lady of the house sat and span; and here, too, when he had nothing else to do, the good man of the house sat down with his dogs and his hurdles, and when there was no neighbour at hand to talk with him mended his nets.'

Whereupon I asked if hawks were common in those days, and my Talking Friend told me they were, and that there was an aerie in the neighbourhood for breeding and training, granted as a privilege to the lords of Caus Castle. On referring to 'Domesday' I found that aeries of hawks are several times mentioned in 'Domesday'—three times at least—and Hawkstone came to my mind at once; but as regards that name, spelt in old documents *Hauckeston*, I was possibly deceived by the similarity of the spelling. But on this subject the reader will find all he wants in Ellis's 'General Introduction to "Domesday."' Hawks are mentioned 'more frequently than in other counties in Cheshire, as well as among the lands between the Ribble and the Mersey.' In several places 'ten pounds is made the optional payment for a hawk, and at Worcester a Norway hawk is particularly specified.'

But to return to the old home. Immediately the porch was passed was what in large homes and in small went by the name of the hall. For although *aula*, *halla*, or *haula*

was usually taken to be the chief mansion house of a manor, yet was it also the receiving or the guest room in every yeoman's home. The one in question occupied nearly all the front of the building, and was open to the roof. Rafters crossed and recrossed it, all of solid oak. It was altogether irregular in its construction, without reference to what are called king-posts and queen-posts; and it was a wonder almost how it held together, though to be accounted for when the solid oak posts were observed, which ran throughout the whole hall like so many columns or pillars. It might have been noted also that, as in old Saxon roofs, the pitch was low, and the cover might have been touched by the hands of a tall man. The high-pitched Norman roof has not yet found its place at a homestead so small as that at Cruck Meole. 'It was a trying time for the old oaks of the land,' said my Talking Friend, 'when they came in.' And I did not venture to breathe to him the great names of Waynflete and Wykeham, or the glorious structures of Eton, and Windesore, and Winchester some reigns later. The fact is that the old home on the Rea needed not to inspire envy or jealousy, and the hall itself was little more than a large grange, or a barn, such as used to be attached to monasteries. One great difference was that instead of slits it had windows.

Then, again, as regards the interior, all thought of modern comfort must be dismissed at once. Certainly it was large, and there was space enough; but except at one end the flooring was irregular—dry and dusty enough in the summer, and in the winter strewed on high occasions with reeds and rushes, on the pillars' sides being all sorts of agricultural implements, and at the far end all instruments of the chase. Over head, too, was many a hawk-perch, and the dogs wandered about at will, rejoicing when the hour of dinner came, and when the trestles were brought and the table spread—which in those days was a movable one—and hastily set. The old home on the Rea was not of sufficient importance to have a daïs, or a *table dormant*, such as Chaucer speaks of:—

> His table dormant in his halle alway
> Stode redy, covered al the longe day.

But, as before stated, it was a home of old and well-known hospitality; not one of which the old satirist of Cherbury Mortimer—Piers Ploughman—might have said in his caustic vein, veiled all the while with so much simplicity—

Elenge is the halle
Ech day in the wike,
Ther the lord ne the lady
Liketh noght to sitte.
Now hath eche sich a rule
To eten by hymselve
In a privee parlour
For povere mennes sake,
Or in a chambre with a chymenee,
And leve the chief halle
That was maad for meles
Wen to eten inne,
And al to spare to spende
That spille shall another.

The truth is that in these days a *with*drawing room (or, as we speak, a *drawing* room, from the great hall, or, indeed, a chamber with a chimney) was looked upon as a matter of effeminate indulgence. The hall, as we have seen, was the chief building even in such a home as the old homestead on the Rea. Around it were the separate bedchambers—*burs*, or *bowers*, our Anglo-Saxon forefathers called them—and which we still retain in the expressions '*a bird in her bower*,' that is, a lady in her chamber; a '*bower maid*,' and a '*bower thane*'—the lady's maid and the chamberlain. The parlour was, in reality, an Anglo-Norman introduction, originally belonging to the monastic homes; whence came also our word '*monitors*,' the '*monitores*' being the abbot's chaplains, who brought him word into the parlour, or, his private chamber, as to what was going on without. Many were the abbots of Shrewsbury who, notwithstanding the magnificence of their venerable pile (for it was worn by the footsteps of the poor), might have said heartily—

Let no Corinthian pillars prop the dome—
A vain expense—on charitable deeds
Better disposed, to clothe the tattered wretch
Who shrinks beneath the blast, to feed the poor,
Pinched with afflictive want.

Besides the old hall in this hospitable old mansion, or, *masura*, as such homes were sometimes called, though not very distinctly, in 'Domesday,' there were all sorts of offices attached, but of the humblest description, for private luxury was a thing almost unknown to its possessors. Nothing, indeed, could be so simple as the sleeping apartments, which in winter good old Degory Watur took care to warm from his stores in Shrewsbury, being the only return he could make, or that would have been received by its open-hearted, open-handed owner. What would be said now to have a dozen such chambers—worse than the worst of the old garrets in Peckwater—in which it was almost impossible to stand upright, and in which the best beds were only stuffed with reeds and straw, with a branch of wormwood tied up in them to keep off the fleas. No such a fleabane as wormwood in those days!

And I called to mind that twenty years ago, at Bignor, in Sussex, where is the old Roman pavement so well worth visiting, that there were several cottages with their outside staircase to enter what was in old times called the '*soller*,' or first flat, or upper room. In Norfolk, I believe, a belfry is still called a bell-soller, or the upper chamber for the ringers. The derivation of the word is by no means clear; all that is clear is that it means a several or a separate chamber; and possibly, as distinguished from the '*cellar*,' or under chamber. Mr. Wright, in his 'History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England during the Middle Ages,' gives an ancient manor house at Millichope, in Shropshire, with its old hall and soller. Eyton refers to it also in his 'Antiquities' as well worth examination, but adds in a note of Mrs. Stackhouse Acton's, 'The lower storey seems to have been used as a storehouse or barn, the upper as a dwelling.' This does not necessarily imply that the lower room was never a hall, though it seems to do so; and those who have observed the old shops at Lübeck and Kiel (I speak of thirty years ago) need find no difficulty. I may add that in an old grant quoted by Eyton elsewhere he speaks of the sale of 'two shops with the chambers above them (*solariis*) situated in the market-place, Shrewsbury;' and probably the old rooms still existing

above the old market-hall are neither more nor less than ancient '*sollers*.'

Whether or not, which shows the value of old attached to the hall and to the rites of hospitality, that it is the description of a miserly wretch that he closes the hall-door of his forefathers and goes and lives niggardly in the '*soller*.'

> Riche homme qui ferme son huis
> Et va mangier en sollier suis.

The reader of old Fuller will find by turning to the 'History of the University of Cambridge,' that Clare Hall was also called *Solere-hall* in the days of Chaucer.

> And namely there was a great college,
> Men clepen it the *Solere-hall* of Cambrege.

'Some will say, And whence termed *Solere-hall*? Was it not from *solarium*, which in the Latin of that age signified a fair and light chamber; or is it not mistaken in pronouncing and printing it for *Scoller-hall*, as afterwhile it is written?'

Leaving good old Fuller alone to seek his derivation, one may venture to add that the 'soller' was a step in advance; for, as an able antiquary, now lost to us, but often referred to in these pages, observes, 'there is no principle of social ethics more certain than this, that in proportion as you secure to a man the command of the necessaries of life you awaken in him the desire for those things which adorn and refine it.'

On looking into Kennett's 'Glossary' the reader will find a marked distinction between *solarium* and *cellarium*, at which I have hinted before. Whether there is anything in it I will not venture to say, but in the old house by the Rea side there was an upper chamber, distinct from the hall, much answering to the '*soller*'; and at Sibald's Cote, or Sibberscott, about two miles distant, there was till within quite recent days, the best 'cellarium' of the country—cool as an ice-house in the warmest weather—and above it the 'solarium,' or the parlour, opening upon an old-fashioned terrace garden, in which were strawberry beds, scarcely surpassed by our finest sorts. One that lived there—so

pleasant was the spot and so retired—might have said with Southey—

> In a narrow sphere—
> The little circle of domestic life—
> I would be known and loved; the world beyond
> Is not for me.

It has been said many times that this old house was given to hospitality, and so it was; but the viands were of the simplest sort. Meat there was always for guests and the wayfarer, but many times in the year it was not so common as game and fish; and after Martinmas it was usually dried. The bacon flitch was the great resort on an emergency. The bread was of two sorts—common bread, of a dark colour; and white bread, called wastelbread. Besides this, there was pea or bean flour, all prepared at one of the mills on the stream close by, of which it might be said, as in after days—for there was no steam then—

> Upon a streame washing a village end
> A mill is plac'd that never difference kend
> 'Twixt dayes for worke and holy tides for rest,
> But always wrought and ground the neighbours' grest.

As hinted at before, the chief drink was small beer, but there was a better sort kept for chief guests and for *ailing* people, called October. What we now call harvest beer was kept all the year round in cellars such as that at Meole, attached to which, being near the brook, was a small well to clear it in floods. Well known was this old cellar to all the pilgrims, the postmen and the newspapers of that age, as they passed on their way between abbey and abbey, minster and monastery. He was succeeded by the pedlar, who remained even until our own days, and whom Shakespeare, in his 'Winter's Tale,' has taken good care we shall never forget as long as we read of Autolycus, who sang as though he 'had eaten ballads, and all men's ears grew to his tunes.'

On the visit of pilgrim or palmer the lady of the house was sure to bring forth her best mead and the strongest waters from the stillroom (a room of much repute in those old-fashioned houses), and when, in times following those we are now writing of, sherry-sack became common, and Canary

wine and Sicilian wine were introduced on high days and holidays, the old house by the Rea side was not without its sample. But these were luxuries, and, indeed, not much liked. The favourite drink of the hall continued for years to be the cool tankard.

In these days all the servants lived in the house, and on everyday occasions there was, comparatively speaking, little difference in meals between the master and his men, the mistress and her maid. An early breakfast, dinner between ten and eleven, the four o'clock luncheon, and supper were the times when all met together. After all, these were the sort of households that made our land what it is; and old Tusser never wrote more to the purpose than when, in his 'Good Husbandry' lessons, he penned these lines:—

> When God hath so blessed thee as able to live,
> And thou hast to rest thee, and able to give,
> Lament thy offences, serve God for amends,
> Make soul to be ready when God for it sends.
>
> Send fruit of thy faith to heaven aforehand,
> For mercy here doing God blesseth thy land;
> He maketh thy store with His blessing to swim,
> And after, thy soul to be blessed with Him.

Such was the way with the inhabiters of this old homestead, and here they had dwelt from the earliest times. Here it was that the Conqueror and the great Earls of Montgomery found them, but they were too insignificant to tempt the marauders to acts of spoliation and violence, and of much too little importance to have their names recorded in 'Domesday.' In the time of Edward the Confessor, Edic and Ernai were the owners, and most likely continued to be the 'Domesday' subtenants under the great Norman earls, or their mesne tenants the Corbets of Caux, of whom the Raven Inn still speaks. For, as old Gwillim puts it, 'he beareth or, a *raven*, proper, by the name of *Corbet*. This is good and ancient *armorie*, as we showed before in the *escocheon* of the *Ravens three legges*.'

So fond were the people of this old homestead that in the summer months, whilst the hawks retained their mews and their perches, the neighbours would take charge of the dogs.

When sport was to be had they joined in the sport and enjoyed it. When the time for sport was over they thought that they, as well as the inmates of the old house, should have their changes. A very old custom this, mentioned in 'Domesday,' under the Royal Demesnes of the King at Henret, now Hendred, in Berkshire, to which Sir Henry Ellis adds another instance: 'In the Plac. Coron. 13 Edward I. one Herdekynus held a tenement in Wodeham Mortimer, in Essex, "per serjantiam ad nutriendam unam Brachettam Domini Regis cum Dominus Rex ei illam miserit ad nutriendam."' It was in fact a very common custom, still retained in Shropshire, and even in vogue in tenants' leases, though now going out. Within my recollection beagles and private packs were provided for in this way.

But, if at all times there was open house and entertainment for the wayfarer here, there were always grand doings and gatherings at a christening or a marriage, and the priests of Hanwood, and sometimes those of Pontesbury also, mustered their people together, doing all they could to show respect where honour was so justly due. 'It was a pleasure to see such scenes as I have seen,' said my Talking Friend, 'as successive daughters of the old house were married. They were always missed and wanted, but they were sure to take sunshine with them wherever they went.' And his leaves rustled with a visible satisfaction. Browne might have seen some such sight as a marriage here when he wrote these lines:—

> As I have seen upon a bridal day
> Full many maids, clad in their best array,
> In honour of the bride, come with their flaskets
> Fill'd full with flowers; others, in wicker baskets,
> Bring from the marish rushes to o'erspread
> The ground whereon to church the lovers tread;
> Whilst that the quaintest youth of all the plaine
> Ushers their way with many a piping straine.

One day we had been talking over the fortunes of the old house, of which my Talking Friend was so fond, when he said to me, 'The almshouse of St. Chad's preceded yours, if I recollect, in point of date, though, curiously enough, the families became connected by marriage; but, as connected

with them, did you ever hear of the "oryell" of St. Chad's, and the history of the old founder's daughter, the leper Blase Tupton, or Tipton?' Without hesitation I said that I had heard in my boyhood her history, but that the particulars had escaped me. On which, with a rustling in his leaves, he proceeded to say—

'Old Bennett Tupton, or Tipton, was a good old man and a thoughtful, and as he had prospered in the world, he remembered the poor and needy, as he ought to do, and builded them almshouses; but somehow or another he omitted to endow them, so that the poor inmates have a hearth and a home, but very little means of support. Willingly for fire-elding would I and my brethren of the forest of the Stiperstones have helped them; but that, you know, was not in our power, rooted and grounded, as we are, in our places. I had indeed a great respect and regard for his daughter, Blase the leper, of whom old Degory Watur often spoke, and of whom I had heard much, first and last, from the priest of Hanwood. His information was derived chiefly from the dean of St. Chad's that was in those days; but I forget his name, though I rather think it was Oliver Kynge. By a grant dated in Edward VI. and Elizabeth's days, the poor inmates of these houses had one yearly rent of 4*l*., arising out of one-half of a certain wood, and woodlands, ground, and pasture, called Lythwood; and I greatly envied the Lyth, as we used to call it, that honour. But, in course of time, what they received dwindled into smaller proportions, and, as you very well know, for lack of endowment there was no means of repairing the crazy, tumble-down tenements, and the small payment being too small to maintain life without parish pay, they are pulled down now. To say the truth, they were but wretched hovels, quite unfit for human habitation. At the same time, it would have been a pleasant thing to have seen them restored like the almshouses of St. Mary's, which were old Degory's delight.'

And I called to mind what I had read in my boyhood, in good old Archdeacon Owen's 'History of Shrewsbury,' a very good book still. The account is taken from Dr. Taylor's MS., and is used by all our local historians:—

'This yeare, 1409, one Bennett Tupton, being a common beere bruar, and dwellinge in St. Chadd's Churche Yarde, in Shrousberie, now called the Colledge, founded the almes-houses in the saide St. Chadd's Churche Yarde, in Shrousberie, being then a man at that time of sixty yeares of age.

'1424.—This yeare, and in the seconde yeare of King Henry VI., one Bennett Tupton, beere bruar, dyed, who dwellyd in a brue howse in St. Chadd's Churche Yarde, in Shrousberie, which afterwards was, and nowe of late days ys, called the Colledge, and was buried in St. Chadd's Churche; who left behynd hym a daughter of his, namy'd Blase Tupton, who cam by chance to be a lepar, and made the oryell, which goythe alonge the west syde of the sayde churche yarde, and so cam aloft to hear servys through a doore made in the churche walle, and so passy'd usually uppon the leades unto a glasse wyndowe, through whych she dayly sang, and hard dayly servys as longe as she lyvy'd.'

Whatever the oriel was originally—a matter on which antiquaries are greatly at issue—Blase Tupton's was one—recess, closet, gallery, room, or what not—out of which a recluse could see without being seen. In her case, poor belepered body! it was a secret chamber for a contrite, lowly, penitent, and very sickly person, who at times could hardly bear herself, much less the presence of the noisy world without and the busy hum of men. But, in her sickness, when she thought she ought to hold aloof from others—like the lepers of old, who stood afar off, and cried, *Unclean, unclean* (Levit. xiii. 45)—she drew still nearer to her God, and the Son of His love, and the Holy Spirit of grace. There is no doubt but that the old lines which follow refer to her, written in after years by one who had read of and meditated on her very sorrowful and sad estate.

BLASE TUPTON, OR THE LEEPUR OF THE ORYELL OF OLD ST. CHAD'S, SHROUSBERIE.

In hours of sorrow and of woe,
My God, I turn to Thee;
On me Thy heavenly grace bestow,
And heal the body's agony.

O Christ! the scourge of leprosy,
Sometime the sinner's meed,
Is nothing if he turn to Thee
In his anguish and his need.

The fretting leprosy of old
Ingrain'd within the walls
Gave secret evidence, untold,
Of Israel's many falls.

I feel within my body scourged,
But still I turn to Thee,
By contrite penitency urged
To bow the bended knee.

I cannot mix among the throng
That seek Thy holy place;
But I am still the throng among,
And seek Thee face to face.

The congregation of the saints
To me is likest heaven;
And as *they* offer up their plaints
I seem as if forgiven.

Then from this lonely oryell
I still will plead for grace;
For who Thy mercies, Lord, may tell,
That all our sins efface?

It is not in St. Chad I trust,
But in my Saviour's blood;
In Him I ever lived, and must
Still cling unto the rood.

Last night I pray'd and kiss'd the rood,
Aweary of the day;
My prayer the rood it not withstood,
Nor turn'd its face away.

Methought the rood it clasp'd its arms
About the leper's neck;
Methought the rood it kissed me,
As though my grief to check.

Beside the church of old St. Chad
I still will tell my beads;
I know where mercy may be had
In all my utmost needs.

The rood and beads they save not me,
But Christ, the living Lord ;
He died upon the accursed tree,
The ever to be adored !

The Spirit to the leper said,
'Take heart of grace, poor Blase ;
When earth to earth and dust is laid
Thy penitence is praise.'

And Blase the leper rests in peace
By the oryell of St. Chad ;
In her time of need, though her heart did bleed,
Her year of release she had.

These lines are evidently of a date comparatively recent, but they very well represent all that my Talking Friend reported of poor Blase Tupton. Evidently, like those who sought refuge in the old hospital of St. Giles, or Ægidius—the leper's retreat without the gate—this poor woman was affected with some severe scorbutic disease, such as those which have before been referred to in these pages, and was deserving of merciful handling; and, by all accounts, she found what she deserved. My Talking Friend never showed himself to greater advantage than when he had to speak of the troubles, and the miseries, and the misfortunes of those around him. Then did it appear that his grain was good, and that, although gnarled and rugged, and bark-bound on the outside, it was all heart of oak within.

For my own part I was always taken with Blase Tupton's history, and could readily picture to myself her solitary loneliness

In her *oryell* where she was.

And I thought how she must often have meditated upon those beautiful verses in the 27th Psalm—'*One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His tabernacle: yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.*' Keble might have read her story when he wrote these lines—

Thou shalt have joy in sadness soon,
The pure, calm hope be thine,
Which brightens, like the eastern moon,
As day's wild lights decline.

Thus souls by nature pitched too high,
By suffering plunged too low,
Meet in the Church's middle sky,
Halfway 'twixt joy and woe,

To practise there the soothing lay
That sorrow best relieves,
Thankful for all God takes away,
Humbled by all He gives.

It was somewhere about this time that a Norman knight —and a pilgrim withal—visited Shrewsbury, and gave himself great airs, asserting that Norman French was the only language for a soldier and a gentleman. This he stated in the abbot's parlour, and as the abbot's guest, where it led to a conversation, in which the gallant was obliged to concede that he had spoken off-book, not being aware to what an extent it had now become intermixed with the Anglo-Saxon. Having been used only to Norman minstrels in the hall, he had to learn that in England, rhymers, as they called themselves, were occupying no very dissimilar position, and were spreading abroad a language which, in its mixed form, was not unacceptable to the people. It was, in fact, somewhere near to this date that the English language, compounded of Anglo-Saxon and Norman French, became known at Court. It was, indeed, Edward III. who first used an English motto on his shield at a tournament, on which was the figure of a white swan.

Ha, ha ! the whyte swan !
By Goddis soule, I am thy man.

And so I fell a-thinking, having been informed by my Talking Friend that the language even on the Rea side had become what he called 'meslin,' an old term for mixed, or miscellaneous, as some say, though when he used it he had only in his mind a mixed sort of bread—part rye, part wheat. And Milman's lines, in his 'Samor, Lord of the Bright City,' flashed across my memory :—

Lo! the island's sons,
Not Briton they, nor Saxon, nor the stock
Of those newcomers, but from each had flowed
All qualities of honour and renown.
The foul, dishonest dregs had fumed away,
And the rich quintessence, unmixed, unveil'd,
A harmony of energies sublime
Knit in the high-brow'd people. Courtesy,
Death-scorning valour, fame's immortal thirst,
An honour inbreathed like the life of life.

The amalgamation was, of course, a benefit and a great one. But it is a question when it really began. There is a passage in Dr. Hook's 'Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury' which is deserving of consideration, and, on the whole, I think, contains a fair statement; though I am quite aware his inferences would not be acquiesced in by all:—

'At first, after the Conquest, the governing body had consisted of Normans and of Normanised Saxons, and the burgesses, if we may employ the term, were, for the most part, Anglo-Saxons. But the distinction of race had almost disappeared in the reign of John. As, in the castles, by intermarriages, and, in the time of war, by companionship in arms, so in the towns, by that freedom and equality which commerce and trade have a tendency to create, the people, high and low, had begun, without looking back to their origin, to regard themselves, not as Saxons, not as Danes, not as Normans, but as English. The races were fused, blended, and united by intermarriages and by common interests. The burgesses had a common object in resisting the oppression of those who had the government of the city, and the aldermen were determined to assert and maintain their power, sometimes, as the manner was, at the expense of justice. The ground of estrangement between the two great parties in the city may nevertheless be traced to the original distinction of race. As regards the burgesses, the Norman minority had been fused into the Saxon majority, and had been leavened with the feelings of Anglo-Saxon independence; on the contrary, the functionaries were at first almost exclusively Normans, and although Anglo-Saxons or the sons of Anglo-

Saxon mothers had been admitted by degrees into the governing body, there remained among them the proud, exclusive, overbearing, aristocratic spirit by which the Normans were everywhere distinguished.'

What is here said applied more particularly to the City of London, but it still shows how the amalgamation of the races was spreading, and so confirms my Talking Friend's words. The reader of 'Ivanhoe' will pick up much in its pages upon this subject, though Sir Francis Palgrave entirely dissented from Sir Walter Scott's views. I am not aware that that able Anglo-Saxon scholar, the late Mr. Kemble, did so, but am rather under the impression that it was the *costume* of the novel with which he is at issue, stating that it was the cause of Thierry's mistakes in his '*Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands*.' But I have only his 'Saxons in England' at hand. Ulrica, of course, as a Saxon female, should only call upon the gods of her forefathers. Scott himself, in referring to Logan's 'Runnymede,' calls attention to the mistake of 'introducing the Saxons as still existing as a high-minded and martial race of nobles.'

'Ivanhoe' dates from Richard I. The date my Talking Friend spoke of, and of which the priests of Hanwood and Pontesbury spoke so often, imparting to him that information he imparted to me, ranges from that time to the days of Richard II. and Henry IV., when the amalgamation was greatly advanced, though the Saxon was even yet called 'a churl,' and, for the most part, tilled the ground. But Norman pride bowed to interest, and they first used the Saxon as an implement, and then, finding they could not well do without his aid, shook hands and were friends, at least to outward appearances and in the everyday courses of life. Not at this time, however, could it be said of the lordly Norman in authority in Claudian's words—

> Cives nec fronte superbâ
> Despicit, aut trepidam vexat legionibus urbem.
> Sed verus patriæ consul, cessantibus armis
> Contentus lictore venit; nec inutile quærit
> Ferri præsidium, solo munitus amore.

On the whole, Scott's remarks in the extract which follows

from the first chapter of 'Ivanhoe,' will still fall in with the opinions of many :—

'Four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite by common language and mutual interests two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the consequences of defeat. The power had been completely placed in the hands of the Norman nobility by the event of the battle of Hastings, and it had been used, as our histories assure us, with no moderate hand. The whole race of Saxon princes and nobles had been extirpated or disinherited with few or no exceptions ; nor were the numbers great who possessed land in the country of their fathers, even as proprietors of the second or of yet inferior classes. The royal policy had long been to weaken by every means, legal or illegal, the strength of a part of the population which was justly considered as nourishing the most inveterate antipathy to their victor. All the monarchs of the Norman race had shown the most marked predilection for their Norman subjects ; the laws of the chase and many others equally unknown to the milder and more free spirit of the Saxon constitution had been fixed upon the needs of the subjugated inhabitants to add weight, as it were, to the feudal chains with which they were loaded. At Court and in the castles of the great nobles, where the pomp and state of a Court was emulated, Norman French was the only language employed ; in courts of law the pleadings and judgments were delivered in the same tongue. In short, French was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other. Still, however, the necessary intercourse between the lords of the soil and those oppressed inferior beings by whom the soil was cultivated occasioned the gradual formation of a dialect, compounded betwixt the French and the Anglo-Saxon, in which they could render themselves mutually intelligible to each other ; and from this necessity arose by degrees the structure of our present English language, in which the speech of the victors and the vanquished have been so happily blended

together, and which has since been so richly improved by importations from the classical languages and from those spoken by the southern nations of Europe.'

The language now spoken on the banks of the Rea was the compound language above referred to, and all, or most, understood it. Those only who passed on their way from Trê-Valdwyn found a difficulty on their travels, but by degrees even they made themselves intelligible, and the district around Caux Castle and, indeed, the whole valley of the Rea were rather advanced than otherwise in cultivation. Parts of it, no doubt, were very bleak and very dreary, as, for instance, round and about Minsterley; but there was many a lovely and beautiful spot by the wayside, and the people were an improving people.

And as I thought how, once upon a time, the squirrel could bound from tree to tree between my Talking Friend's branches and Minsterley, I repeated to myself, out of Cowley's 'Discourse, by way of Essay, on Solitude,' the lines which follow:—

Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good,
Hail, ye plebeian underwood,
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plenteous food
Pay with their grateful voice.

Hail, the poor muse's richest manor seat,
Ye country houses and retreat,
Which all the happy gods so love
That for you oft they quit their bright and great
Metropolis above.

Here Nature does a house for me erect,
Nature, the fairest architect,
Who those fond artists does despise
That can the fair and living trees neglect,
Yet the dead timber prize.

Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft winds above me flying,
With all their wanton boughs dispute,
And the more tuneful birds to both replying,
Nor be myself too mute.

A silver stream shall roll his waters near,
Gilt with the sunbeams here and there,
On whose enamell'd bank I'll walk,
And see how prettily they smile, and hear
How prettily they talk.

Ah! wretched and too solitary he
Who loves not his own company.
He'll feel the weight of 't many a day,
Unless he call on sin or vanity
To help to bear 't away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

YORK AND LANCASTER.

Mark well my wordes, and you shall find him blest
That meddleth least with warres in any wise,
But quiet lives and all debate defies.
GASCOIGNE, *The Fruites of Warre*, Southey's British Poets, p. 218.

These factions amongst great men, they are like
Foxes; when their heads are divided,
They carry fire in their tails; and all the country
About them goes to wrack for 't.
WEBSTER, *Duchess of Malfi*, i. 248. D.

The sword was drawn between the houses of York and Lancaster, which usually cuts down corn as well as men.—Bp. FLEETWOOD'S *Chron. Brit.* p. 412. Folio.

Ill blows the wind that profits nobody.
This man, whom hand to hand I slew in fight,
May be possessed with some store of crowns,
And I that haply take them from him now
May yet, ere night, yield both my life and them
To some man else, as this dead man doth me.
Who's this? O God! it is my father's face
Who in this conflict I unawares have killed.
O heavy times, begetting such events!
Henry VI. Part III. act ii. sc. 5.

OF Henry V.'s days, of his wild escapades in his youth, and, indeed, of the French wars and of the great battle of Agincourt, October 25, 1415, my Talking Friend knew very little. Such matters, though of mighty import, were out of his way. It was to his soldiers, not to the Old Oak by the Rea side, that Henry spoke these words before the fight began, when Westmoreland wished for more men:—

Oh, do not wish one more;
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host
That he which hath no stomach to this fight
Let him depart: his passport shall be made,

And crowns for convoy put into his purse.
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is call'd the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day and comes safe home
Will stand on tip-toe when this day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day and see old age
Will yearly on the vigil feast his friends,
And say, To-morrow is St. Crispian.
Then will he strip his sleeve, and show his scars,
And say, These wounds I had on Crispian's day.

Excepting his opposition to the rights of conscience in matters of religion, Henry V. came to the throne and maintained his kingship for life, with the title of a good and a courageous man, and as one of royal standard, notwithstanding his father's usurpation. It could not be said of him, as was said of Galba, '*Omnium consensu capax imperii, nisi imperâsset*'; for he cast off at once all his wild companions and faced his duties; not, however, unfeelingly, but with a readiness to receive them into favour if they would do as *he* had resolved to do. We must all, however, pay our penalties; and it is to be remembered as a painful lesson that he had not cleared off all his debts, contracted when Prince of Wales, till within a year of his death. How many, in later years, have contracted debts when at college which have hung about their necks like a millstone till their lives' end?

That Henry V. was a changed man is the verdict of history; and Shakespeare has taken his usual care to put it into the mouths of Chicheley, archbishop of Canterbury, and Fordham, bishop of Ely. The first two lines refer to his Church views, which have been alluded to just above.

Cant. The king is full of grace and fair regard.
Ely. And a true lover of the holy Church.
Cant. The courses of his youth promised it not.
The breath no sooner left his father's body
But that his wildness, mortified in him,
Seem'd to die too; yea, at that very moment
Consideration like an angel came,
And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a paradise
To envelop and contain celestial spirits.

Never was such a sudden scholar made ;
Never came reformation in a flood
With such a heady current, scouring faults ;
Nor never hydra-headed wilfulness
So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
As in this king.
Ely. We are blessed in the change.
Cant. Hear him but reason in divinity,
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish
You would desire the king were made a prelate ;
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs—
You would say, it hath been all in all his study ;
List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle render'd you in musick ;
Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter ; that, when he speaks,
The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,
And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears
To steal his sweet and honey'd sentences :
So that the art and practick part of life
Must be the mistress to this theorick.

Somewhat too courtly is the language of Archbishop Chicheley ; but we may put that down to the licence of the drama. The priest of Hanwood that was in those days was greatly interested in his translation from St. David's to Lambeth ; and on the whole he was, as the king wrote word to the pope, 'a person of eminent note, and deserved this dignity by his virtue.' He was, however, quite as much opposed to the Lollards as his predecessor, Archbishop Arundel.

The death of Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, was, perhaps, the greatest blot upon the name of Henry V. In visiting the grand old ruin at Eltham I never could conceive that 'The Old Man of the Castle,' if this was he, intended treachery against his sovereign lord the king, and I very much doubt his being in the tumultuous assembly of the Lollards in St. Giles-in-the-Fields, Jan. 6, 1414. The priest of Hanwood was sadly vexed when Welshmen passed under the Old Oak and reported that he was taken by Lord Powis ; and it grieved him to the heart to find that he was afterwards conveyed to Westminster, where he was tried and afterwards

strangled and burnt at Tyburn. From what I heard my Talking Friend say, the priest of Hanwood was one who would have entirely agreed with Sir John Oldcastle on the matter of pilgrimages: 'I suppose this fully, that every man in this erthe is a pilgrime towarde blyss or towarde peyne; and that he that knoweth not, ne will not knowe, ne kepe the holy commandementes of God in his lyvyng here, al be it that he goe on pylgrimage to al the worlde, and he dy so, he shal be dampned; and he that knoweth the holy commandementes of God, and kepeth them hys end, he shal be saved, tho' he nevir in hys lyve go on pylgrimage, as men use now, to Canterbury, or to Rome, or to any other place.'

I may mention in passing that my Talking Friend had never heard of the siege of Meaux, nor of the 'Oak of Vaurus,' on which so many of the English were hanged, nor of that retributive justice which brought the ferocious Vaurus to be hanged at last upon his own oak—which would have pleased him much, for he could not abide any indignity to be practised on one of his kind!

I may add, likewise, in passing onwards, that my Talking Friend had never heard of the Paris balls sent by the Dauphin to Henry to play with, nor of his reply that he 'would shortly send to him some London balls with which he would break down the roofs of houses.' No doubt it is but a vamped-up story, but Shakespeare has made us all familiar with it, and the schoolboy can repeat the lines:—

> We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us;
> His present and your pains we thank you for.
> When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,
> We will in France, by God's grace, play a set
> Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard.
> Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler
> That all the courts of France will be disturb'd
> With chases.

My Talking Friend's information on the reign of Henry VI., long as it was, was comparatively small, and the opinion of the priest that was at Hanwood in those days was pretty much that of Hume's, who states that from the first, owing to the softness of his temper and weakness of his understanding,

'it was easy to perceive that his reign would be a perpetual minority.' Nothing can be nearer the truth than Daniel's description of him in his historical poem :—

> And sure this king that now the crown possessed
> (Henry the Sixth) was one whose life was free
> From that command of vice, whereto the rest
> Of most those mighty sovereigns subjects be ;
> And numbered might have been among the best
> Of other men, if not of that degree.
> A right good man, and yet an evil king,
> Unfit for what he had the managing.
>
> Of humble spirit, of nature continent,
> No thought t' increase he had, save keep his own.
> For pardoning apter than for punishment,
> He chokes his power to have his bounty known.
> Far from revenge, soon won, soon made content,
> As fitter for a cloister than a crown ;
> Whose holy mind so much addicted is
> On the world to come that he neglecteth this.
>
> With such a weak-good, feeble-godly king
> Hath Richard, Duke of York, his cause to try.

The extract following, from Fuller's 'Church History,' will say all else that needs to be said by way of introduction : 'There was an old prophecy among the English (observed by foreigners to be the greatest prophecy-mongers, and whilst the devil knows their diet they shall never want a dish to please the palate) that an English prince, born at Windsor, should be unfortunate in losing what his father had acquired ; whereupon King Henry forbade Queen Katherine (big with child) to be delivered there ; who, out of the corrupt principle *nitimur in vetitum*, and affecting her father' (Charles VI., king of France) 'before her husband, was there brought to bed of Henry VI., in whose reign the fair victories woven by his father's valour were, by cowardice, carelessness, and contentions, unravelled to nothing.' *Sic transit gloria mundi !*

Of 'Jack Cade and his mischievous meiny,' as old Lambarde speaks, little or nothing was known on the banks of the Rea. What affected Kent and London materially was of very little matter here. *Jack Amend-all*, as he was sometimes called in derision, was nothing to the Old Oak, neither

had it then got bruited abroad how he pretended himself to be the Lord Mortimer, nor was it supposed that he was but a mere tool in the hands of Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, about this time resident in his castle of Ludlow. The reader will recollect the lines in 'Henry VI.' with which the messenger scares the king:—

> The rebels are in Southwark! Fly, my lord!
> Jack Cade proclaims himself Lord Mortimer,
> Descended from the Duke of Clarence' house;
> And calls your grace usurper openly,
> And vows to crown himself in Westminster.

This was that Jack Cade that struck his staff upon London stone and wished the conduits to run claret for the first year of his reign, and who had previously assured Dick the Butcher, to his high satisfaction, 'There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny; the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops; and I will make it felony to drink small beer; and all the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass.' But his end, like the end of most rebels, was a troubled one, and he fell by the hands of

> Alexander Iden, an esquire of Kent;

or, in old Stow's words, 'a gentleman of Kent, named Alexander Eden, awaited so his time that he took the said Cade in a garden in Sussex. And then he was slain at Horsfield, and brought to London in a cart, and there quartered, his head set on London Bridge and his quarters sent to divers places in Kent.'

As early as February 1451 the rich Duke of York, as he was called, was intent upon Henry VI.'s crown, however much he abounded in professions of loyalty. The storm was gathering and would burst before long, and many and long a day would it be till all was once more still.

> For sorrow, like a heavy hanging bell,
> Once set on ringing with his own weight goes;
> For little strength rings out the doleful knell.

What old Master Camden called 'doleful, dumpish, and uncomfortable times' followed, and nothing can be more

miserable to read than their history. In the words of the old ballad which Scott loved so well, 'Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead'—

> Then til't they gaed wi' heart and hand,
> The blows fell thick as bickering hail,
> And many a horse ran masterless,
> And many a comlie cheek was pale.

It has been supposed, from a letter written by the Duke of York from his castle of Ludlow about this time to the bailiffs of Shrewsbury, that he was joined by a body of Salopians in his march to Blackheath, but I never heard my Talking Friend say anything on the subject. What I recollect his saying, on the authority, as usual, of the priest of Hanwood, was that on the king's mental derangement, in 1453, York was made Protector, and that a few years later, in 1457, he was in Shrewsbury with his son, the Earl of March, afterwards Edward IV.

I may add here that it was the Duke of York's statue which stood over the gateway of the Welsh Bridge. My Talking Friend laughed at the notion of its being called 'Llewellyn the Great,' and hinted more than once that the Duke of York was ignored only to scrape favour with Henry VII., who detested the house of York thoroughly. Taffy's so-called effigy on which the Welshmen gazed at the Welsh Gate of Shrewsbury may now be seen at the end of the old market-house, where, likewise, I always supposed the identical clock spoken of by Falstaff to have stood.

Somewhere about this time my Talking Friend spoke of a comet, as I supposed; but on turning to Stow's 'Chronicle' I find it must have been in 1455, for he says, 'This yeare, in the month of June, appeared a comet, or starre, called *stella cometa*, betwixt the north and the east, extending his beams towards the south.' It is not impossible that the lines of Shakespeare date forward in allusion to this comet. They are the commencement of the First Part of 'King Henry VI.'

> Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to-nigh
> Comets, importing change of times and states,
> Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,
> And with them scourge the bad revolting stars

That have consented unto Henry's death!
Henry the Fifth, too famous to live long!
England ne'er lost a king of so much worth.

It was in the year 1459 (September 23) that the battle was fought at Blackheath, near Drayton, in which the Lancastrians were defeated, and James Touchet, Lord Audley, fell by the hand of Roger Kynaston of Hordley. It appears to have been a field of great carnage, but, says old Stow, 'the greatest loss fell to them of *Chestershire* that had received the prince's livery of swans.' There was evidently at this time a great commotion, if not a panic, in Shrewsbury, and John Altree, the 'tenser,' brought word to the old homestead at Meole how watch was kept in the belfry of St. Mary's Church.

Later in this same year was the fight at Ludford, close to Ludlow, and the passive king was at Worcester, on his way there, which again raised great alarm in Shrewsbury. The remarkable letter given in Stow was written on October 10, and is signed by the hand of *R. York, R. Warwicke, R. Salisburie.* It is mentioned in this letter that they had sent an indenture touching their truth and loyalty and duty to his good grace by the prior of the church of Worcester, 'and divers other doctors, and among other by Master William Linwoode, doctor of divinity, which ministered unto us severally the blessed sacrament of the body of Jesus.' Yet, after all this, and before the fight at Ludford, they caused a proclamation to be made throughout the host that Henry VI. had suddenly expired, and ordered Masses to be said for the repose of his soul! So little rest is there in rebellion, and in rebel hearts—such unrest, rather! Those old lines in Gorboduc, after all, convey a lesson which is worth the conning well :—

Though kings forget to govern as they ought,
Yet subjects must obey as they are bound.

I may note here, by the way, that about this time we begin to find common mention made of cannon. For instance, at the battle just alluded to, whether of Ludlow or Ludford, the Duke of York placed his cannon in the front of his position.

Though cannon are said to have been used at Cressy, A.D. 1346, the fact is disputed by Voltaire. This last argument of kings, as Louis XIV. called artillery, was first used in the English service by the governor of Calais, 6 Richard II., 1383. This would be somewhere about sixty years after what may be called the reinvention of gunpowder by Michael Schwartz—for, to say nothing of Roger Bacon, it, like the compass, is now well ascertained to have been known to the Chinese. Ralph Hogge, assisted by Peter Baude, a Frenchman, cast the first iron ordnance in England. It was at Buxted, in Sussex, one of the localities of the great iron furnaces in that county, which disappeared for want of wood, not for want of the iron stone.

Of the battle of Northampton, where Henry VI. was taken prisoner, July 10, 1460; of that at Wakefield, where the Duke of York fell on December 30 in the same year and when his second son, the beautiful youth Rutland, was barbarously murdered by Lord Clifford, my Talking Friend evidently knew nothing; nor did he seem to know much of the fight at Mortimer's Cross, though Edward IV. marched there from Shrewsbury. The fact is they did not march his way, and the country on the Rea side was not pillaged. But, if he had not heard of these fights he *had* heard of that at Towton, March 29, 1461, when from thirty to forty thousand people were said to have perished. Towton is about eight miles from York, and is called by Daniel 'our great Pharsalian field,' or

> Towton in the north, the greatest day
> Of ruin that dissension ever brought
> Unto this kingdom: when two crowns did sway
> The work of slaughter, two kings' causes wrought
> Destruction to one people.

It was, however, from an accidental circumstance that my Talking Friend came to the knowledge of this fight. A very old friend of the priest of Hanwood, Edwin Fearless by name, had lately returned from the East, like an old pilgrim of former days, with a palm branch in his hand; and he it was —a visitor then at the abbot's in Shrewsbury—who remarked that of all the fights that had hitherto taken place in their

sad civil wars he thought that the worst, for it commenced on the eve of Palm Sunday, which should have warned and rebuked the combatants. 'But when the blood boils, and the sword is unsheathed, and rebellion is thought nothing of, who then thinks of peace?' said the wearied traveller, perhaps not speaking words entirely acceptable, for, as is well known, and has above been stated, the old town favoured the Yorkists. Daniel again alludes to this circumstance of time:—

> It was upon the twilight of that day,
> That peaceful day, when the religious bear
> The olive branches as they go to pray
> (And we, in lieu, the blooming palm use here),
> When both the armies, ready in array
> For th' early sacrifice of blood, appear
> Prepared for mischief ere they had full light
> To see to do it, and to do it right.

It is curious to call to mind the company the successive priests of Hanwood met first and last in the abbot's parlour in Shrewsbury. The proximity of Meole and Hanwood and the Meole Brook is not enough to account for it, though, no doubt, the stews and pools of the establishment were replenished with the fish of the Rea. It is quite clear that in the long run the priests must have been men of quiet mood, or they would not have been such acceptable guests. The religious of those days knew as well as we do in ours who were worth their salt and who not; and to have said

> Nulla in tam magno est corpore mica salis

would certainly have been pretty much a prohibition—certainly exclusive.

From this date we may consider ourselves as having entered upon the reign of Edward IV., though the unfortunate Henry survived yet many years, dying May 22, 1471, not long after the great battles of Barnet (April 5) and Tewkesbury (May 4).

Edward IV.'s reign of twenty-three years was a sad one in many ways, notwithstanding the beauty of his person, the princeliness of his presence, and no lack of talent, some have said, for government. Of his connection with Shrewsbury

my Talking Friend often spoke, but what he reported had nothing to do with his own locality. The priest of Hanwood's rejoicing was this—that the deluge of blood was stayed —at least so he hoped. And I called to mind those lines of Milman in 'Samor, Lord of the Bright City'—

> Here, a snow-white rose
> And there a red, with fatal blossoming
> And deadly fragrance, maddening all the land.
> I heard, I saw, ah! impious sights and sounds,
> Their warcries in one tongue, two banner rolls
> Wov'n in one loom, two lances from one forge,
> Two children from one womb in conflict meet;
> 'Gainst brother brother's blood cried out to heaven.
> And he that rent the vizor of his face
> Look'd through the shatter'd bars and saw his son.
> Ha, Britain, in thine entrails dost thou flesh
> Thy ravin! Thy baronial castles blaze
> With firebrands from their hospitable hearths!

The extract following, from the historians of Shrewsbury, though long, will best give what else is needed, relative to the reign of Edward IV., as connected with Shrewsbury:—

'When he was firmly settled on the throne by the second and final expulsion of his rival, he sent his queen home to be delivered of her second son Richard at Shrewsbury, in 1473-4. The place which he chose for her residence was the house of Dominican or Preaching Friars, on the banks of the Severn, below the collegiate church of St. Mary, where he had been entertained himself on a former occasion. He probably considered this situation to be less exposed to sudden attack than the monastery of St. Peter, on the other side of the river. She was also delivered here of her third son, George. Indeed, on the first of these occasions the king seems to have accompanied her hither; it is at least certain that he was resident in Shrewsbury during some part of the year 1473. It was probably in consequence of some such occasional residence of the royal family in this town that in 1475 it was visited by Thomas Gray, recently created Marquis of Dorset, and the lord Richard his brother, two of the queen's sons by her former husband.

'Edward IV. possessed eminent talents for government, and

many of the qualities of a great king. He bestowed much attention on the improvement of commerce. The intelligent writer of the second continuation to the Chronicle of Croyland writes that he purchased merchant vessels, laded them with wools, cloths, tin, and other commodities of his realm, as one of those who lived by merchandise, and bartered them by his factors both in Italy and Greece. By incorporating the Fraternity of Drapers of Salop he led to the most important effects on the opulence of the town and country for the three succeeding centuries ; and by the institution of the council in the Marches of Wales, he laid the foundation of a subordination to authority, and a regular administration of justice in this quarter of his dominions, which it had never known before. To this he was naturally led by the circumstances of his early life. Much of it had been spent in the Marches of Wales. The very title which he bore till he ascended the throne was derived from that district. Ludlow had been the favourite scene of his infancy and childhood, and to that castle he took the resolution of sending his son the Prince of Wales at an early period, attended by a council to regulate the affairs of these Marches.'

The commencement of Sir Thomas More's 'History of King Richard III.' may very well be the next step in advance, the more so as, in despite of Walpole's 'Historic Doubts,' and even Sharon Turner's favourable judgment, I acquiesce in the wise chancellor's view of Richard's character, no doubt followed by old Fuller, and by the poet Gray, in 'The Bard,' who speaks of

> The towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,
> With many a foul and midnight murder fed.

'King Edward (of that name the fourth), after that he had lived forty and three years seven months and six days, and thereof reigned twenty-two years one month and eight days, died at Westminster the 9th day of April, the year of our Redemption 1483, leaving much fair issue.' To which he adds presently, speaking of the young princes: 'Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, by nature their uncle, by office their protector, to their father beholden, to themselves by

oath and allegiance bounden, all the bands broken that bind man and man together, without any respect of God or the world, unnaturally contrived to bereave them not only of their dignity, but also of their lives.'

Fuller pithily calls the Duke of Gloucester Protector, 'to protect him'—that is, Edward V.—'from any of his friends to come near him.' On the death of his father he was at Ludlow Castle, and as the charge of his uncle Anthony, Earl Rivers—that Earl Rivers so notorious for his attachment to literature, called by Hume 'the most accomplished nobleman in England,' for by him it was that Caxton was recommended to the protection of Edward IV. The reader must turn to Horace Walpole's 'Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England,' in the frontispiece to which he will see the celebrated portrait, from the MS. in the Archbishop of Canterbury's library at Lambeth, underneath which is the inscription following: 'Earl Rivers presenting his book and Caxton his printer to Edward IV., the queen, and prince; from a curious MS. in the archbishop's library at Lambeth. The portrait of the prince (afterwards Edward V.) is the only one known of him, and has been engraved by Vertue among the heads of the kings. The person in a cap and robe of state is probably Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as he well resembles the king, and as Clarence was always too great an enemy of the queen to be introduced as her brother. The book was printed in 1477, when Clarence was in Ireland, and in the beginning of the next year he was murdered.' So runs the inscription, and the account of Anthony Widville, Earl Rivers, will be found in a subsequent page. The book presented was 'The Dictes and Sayinges of the Philosophers'—supposed to be the second ever printed by Caxton in England. Gloucester's name is connected with Shrewsbury, for the government of which we have his ordinances. He had, in fact, the command of Shrewsbury, and of that portion of the Marches of Wales which adjoins. The passage following, from the 'Mirror for Magistrates,' illustrates this:—

> That time lay I at Ludlow, Wales his border,
> For with the prince the king had sent me thyther
> To staye the robberies, spoyle, and foule disorder

Of divers outlawes gathered there together,
Whose banding tended no man wel wist whither.
When those by wisdome safely were suppressed
Came woeful newes—our soverayne was deceased.

The question is asked, Were the young princes massacred? 'By a bloody, bloodless death,' says old Fuller. 'They were stifled with pillows, and then obscurely buried.' Says Hume: 'The Duke of Gloucester was capable of committing the most bloody and treacherous murders with the utmost coolness and indifference.' Such are the conclusions of two very different historians. They evidently, both of them, acquiesced in the narrative of Sir Thomas More, who first tells the stories of Richard's message to Sir Robert Brackenbury, and of his refusal to be a party to the deed of blood. The following is the chancellor's narrative in full, and, like Mr. Brewer, in his note in Fuller, I am disinclined to discredit the main points, especially after Sir Thomas More's suggestion that he had learnt the fact 'of them who must know, and had little cause to lie.' The reader is, of course, aware that Stow has incorporated this history into his 'Chronicle.' Shakespeare's scenes have become household words.

'Sir James Tyrel devised that they should be murdered in their beds. To the execution whereof he appointed Miles Forest, one of the four who kept them, a fellow fleshed in murder before time. To him he joined one John Dighton, his own horsekeeper, a big, broad, square, strong knave. Then, all the others being removed from them, this Miles Forest and John Dighton about midnight, the silly children lying in their beds, came into the chamber, and suddenly wrapped them up among the clothes—so bewrapped them and entangled them, keeping down by force the feather bed and pillows hard into their mouths, that within a while smothered and stifled, their breath failing, they gave up to God their innocent souls unto the joys of heaven, leaving to the tormentors their bodies dead in the bed; whom after that the wretches perceived, first by the struggling from the pains of death and after long lying still, to be thoroughly dead, they laid their bodies naked out upon the bed, and fetched Sir James to see them, who, upon the sight of them, caused their

murderers to lay them at the stair-foot, meetly deep in the ground, under a great heap of stones.' And there they lay till the days of Charles II.

On my making inquiries of my Talking Friend as to the character of Richard III., his reply was that there was a hollow and a hoarse murmur from the waters of the Rea whenever his name was mentioned, and the priest of Hanwood in those days had never any good to report of him; yet was the priest a kind-hearted and considerate man, and never given to speak hard words of anyone, much less of an anointed king. In after years it was reported in the abbot's parlour in Shrewsbury that Richard underwent inexpressible torments of mind, and the ghost scene in 'Richard III.' is not certainly without foundation, though the original of it may be found in Roman story. True or not, the mournful sound of the waters of the Rea on its way to the Severn was not more mournful than the confession put into Richard's own mouth, in the 'Mirror for Magistrates,' before referred to:—

> Alas, that ever prince should thus his honour stayne
> With the blood of innocents, most shameful to be tolde;
> For these two noble impes I caused to be slaine,
> Of yeares not full ripe as yet to rule and raigne;
> For which I was abhorred both of yong and olde
> But as the deede was odious in sight of God and man,
> So shame and destruction in the ende I wan.

As far as I could pick out, all that was known about Richard III.'s acts and deeds was narrated to the priest of Hanwood by one old John Adams, of Pontesbury, who himself had heard it from Nicholas Warynge, merchant of the staple of Calais. This John Adams lived to a very great age, and was a constant visitor, when in Shrewsbury, at Charlton Hall (the present theatre), said by some, but with hardly sufficient authority, to have been the residences of the princes of Powis. Mr. Philips is quoted by Archdeacon Owen for this statement.

As I meditated on the ambitious projects of Richard, and his wading through blood to the throne on which he sat for so little a while, I could not but repeat to myself the lines of Webster in the 'Devil's Law Case':—

> Wretches turn
> The tide of their good fortunes, and being drench'd
> In some presumptuous and hidden sins,
> While they aspire to do themselves most right,
> The devil that rules i' th' air hangs in their light.

At all events, 'To use force first,' as Richard did, 'before people are fairly taught the truth, is to knock a nail into a board without wimbling a hole first, which then either not enters, or turns crooked, and splits the wood it pierceth.'

One other point I was determined to make inquiries about, which dates from this reign—I mean the betrayal of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, which, as commonly told, is an act of the basest ingratitude, and attaches to our own county, the place of the betrayal being Lacone, near Wem. The Duke of Buckingham's turning against the king is a mere matter of history, but that he was betrayed by '*Humphrey* Banastaire,' as is twice stated in the 'Mirror for Magistrates,' and that '*Jhon Mitton*' was sheriff of Shropshire then, as is once stated, is certainly incorrect on historical data equally to be relied upon.

So, in the first place, I asked my Talking Friend about the matter, and his reply was that he had never heard anything about the complaint of Henry, Duke of Buckingham, till long after the time of Richard III., to which he added that the priest of Hanwood said that Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and Earl of Dorset was the first who boldly delivered the fact without hesitation or doubt, and that he was altogether mistaken in the Christian names of the parties, for that Banastre's was *Raulyn*, or *Ralph*, and Mytton's *Thomas*. The story, so far as Banastre is concerned, was certainly not current much before the reign of Elizabeth. The probability is that the duke's retreat was discovered, and that he was obliged to be given up. The reader will find the whole story well canvassed by the historians of Shrewsbury, and the conclusion they arrive at is the one here stated.

As I stated before, the defection of the Duke of Buckingham is a matter of history, and so is the account of his being delivered up by the sheriff, Thomas Mitton, or Mytton, though I do not answer for the legend, which applies to two years after,

and previous to the battle of Bosworth Field, by which the Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., was permitted to step over his body, as it seems to have a Tarpeian stamp about it, and a reference to Roman story. Even so late as this such stories were indulged in, vamped up, whether by lawyers or ecclesiastics.

Some say that the arrangement in Richmond's favour—afterwards Henry VII.—was made with the countess his mother, or the lady Margaret, whom the Duke of Buckingham accidentally met 'as he was riding between Worcester and Bridgenorth on his way to Shrewsbury. On so trifling an incident was the accession of the house of Tudor and the mighty consequences thence ensuing to the ultimate prosperity of this great empire ordained to depend. The Duke, it is probable, was frequently called by his affairs to Shrewsbury. Not far distant from it lay the great estates which he enjoyed as representative of the ancient family of Corbet of Caus. It was one of the few acts of the reign of Edward V. to appoint him (May 15) constable of all castles, and steward of all lordships, manors, and lands belonging to the crown within this county; and he was continued in the same office by Richard III. These events belong to the latter end of the summer of 1483.' So state the historians of Shrewsbury.

Later in this same year we find the duke had absolutely revolted, and taken up arms against Richard, but was unable to make his way into Shropshire, and so to join his confederates in the west, by reason of a great flood, such as we have often seen come down in haste from the Welsh mountains, carrying all before it. This flood was long known by the name of '*Buckingham's Water*,' and is thus referred to by Shakespeare:—

> *Third Messenger.* The news I have to tell your Majesty
> Is that, by sudden floods and fall of waters,
> Buckingham's army is dispersed and scattered,
> And he himself wandered away alone
> No man knows whither.

It was upon this occasion that having advanced as far as Weobley, in Herefordshire (about twelve miles north-west from Hereford), and having heard of the king's proclamation

against him as a great rebel and traitor, together with a reward of 1,000*l.* in money, or 100*l.* in land, to the person who should take him, he was obliged to quit that place in disguise, and thence betook himself to the house of an old retainer who had worn his livery—to the house, in fact, of Ralph Banastre, Esq., at Lacon, near Wem, as before recorded. Having thus traced his flight, I give the words of the 'Complaynt of Henry, Duke of Buckingham,' from the 'Mirror for Magistrates':—

> And being thus alone and all forsake
> Amid the thicke, forwandred in despayre,
> As one dismayde, ne wist what way to take,
> Until at last gan to my mynde repayre
> A man of myne called *Humphrey Banastaire*;
> Wherewith me feeling much recomforted
> In hope of succour, to his home I fled,
>
> Who being one whom erst I had up brought,
> Even from his youth, and loved and liked best,
> To gentry state advancing him from nought;
> And had in secret trust, above the reste
> Of speciall trust, now, being thus distrest,
> Ful secretly to hym I mee convayede,
> Not doubting there but I should fynd some ayde.
>
> But out, alas! on cruell trecherie,
> When that this caitiffe once an inkling heard
> How that King Richarde had proclaymde that hee
> Which once descryde should have for his rewarde
> A thousande poundes, and farther be prefarde,
> His truth so turned to treson, all disdaynde,
> That fayth quite fled, and I by trust was traynde.
>
> For by this wretch I being straite betrayede
> To one *Jhon Mitton*, sheriffe of Shropshire then,
> All sodaynly was taken and convayed
> To Salisburie, with rout of harvest men,
> Unto King Richard there, encamped then
> Fast by the citie with a mightie host,
> Withouten doom where head and life I lost.

There is no doubt that the duke was beheaded at Salisbury, notwithstanding the myth of his having been beheaded at Shrewsbury and buried at St. Alkmond's. Before his death he would have spoken with Richard, as Essex would

with Elizabeth in after days, but the request was not granted, and he perished miserably on All Souls' Day—as Shakespeare makes him say—

> Then All Souls' day is my body's doomsday.

Our historians add that Richard was so well satisfied with the conduct of the burgesses of Salop on this critical occasion that 'he pardoned, remitted, and relessed for ever twenty marks of their fee-farme yearly.'

There is no doubt that Ralph Banastre, Esq., 'wretch of wretches all,' as Buckingham calls him in his 'Complaynt,' was rewarded with land at Ealding, or Yalden, in Kent, preferring it to money; but possibly, probably even, he was not the betrayer of his benefactor, but constrained to yield him up to the sheriff. How, under those circumstances, he could receive the land is a problem I cannot solve; but it is remarkable that in the legend of Richard, which the historians so often quoted do not allude to, some palliation or extenuation seems to be admitted.

Of the battle of Bosworth Field, which set Richmond on the throne, my Talking Friend seemed to know little. It was fought August 22, 1485, on Redmoor Plain, 'as the way leads to Atherstone,' says Drayton, adding—

> O Redmore, it then seemed thy name was not in vain,
> When with a thousand's blood the earth was coloured red.

All that he could recollect having heard talk of was the advance of the forces. It appears that the Welsh portion of the army—'Rice-ap-Thomas, with a valiant crew,' as Shakespeare puts it—and that of the earl reunited at the Long Mountain, or Cen Digol—so, at least, it is said, and my Talking Friend had often heard this; for such as came from Montgomery and Welshpool, Venington, the Marsh, and Westbury often came his way. Caus Castle, indeed, was in those days generally made a house of call by such as passed through the valley of the Rea, and these wayfarers told the tale. Of Richmond's entry into Shrewsbury over Montford Bridge, and of his lodging at Forton, the ominous mansion of '*Fortune*'; of the story of the sheriff Thomas Mytton, Esq., before alluded to, and of his rapturous reception by the in-

habitants—this, he would say, was known to everybody. And he added that the house in which Richmond lodged, on his advance to Bosworth, was very well known to the priest of Hanwood, as he passed it continually on his way from the abbot's parlour, over the water, when he went to visit his friend the dean of St. Chad's.

And this brings us to the period of the battle itself, of which my Talking Friend seemed to know nothing.

> The last of that long war
> Entitled by the name of York and Lancaster.

Amongst other questions which I put to my Talking Friend was this, whether the old rhymes which we find in the chronicles were correct; the first—

> The cat, the rat, and Lovel the dog
> Rule all England under the hog;

alluding, of course, to Catesby, Ratcliffe, Lovel, and Richard's own arms of the boar; the other, thus put by Shakespeare, who makes Norfolk tell the king he found it in his tent:—

> Jocky of Norfolk, be not too bold,
> For Dickon, thy master, is bought and sold.

His reply was that he suspected they were probably long after this time fabricated, after the secret issues of the traitors in Richard's camp oozed out; for there could be no doubt now that he was bought and sold over and over again.

It has been said that the crown was found on a hawthorn bush (hence Henry VII.'s arms) in or close by Richard's tent, and was then and there put on Richmond's head. In summing up this long story with the concluding lines of Shakespeare, it is painful to be assured that the life and reign of Henry VII. did not yield fruit according to promise.

We are still told that we misjudge Richard, but I have not arrived at this conclusion myself, nor can I look upon him but as a murderer and a usurper. Of his talents and abilities I might entertain no doubt, and of his acts when on the throne it is sufficient for the public statutes and records to speak. The gist of the question is, How did he get there? All that is in his favour the reader may find summed up in

those useful little volumes, 'The Annals of England,' from which I extract the following introductory paragraph :—

'Brief and troubled as was the period of Richard's rule, several matters, justly considered as of great importance at the present day, date from it. The statutes of his parliament are the first that were drawn up in the English language, as they were also the first that were printed; the office of consul, so necessary to the interest of merchants and travellers abroad, was established by him; and that great engine of modern convenience, the post-office, is based on a system of carriers established by him for the rapid transmission of intelligence during his campaign in Scotland in 1481 and 1482.'

Passing on from Richard himself, I asked my Talking Friend about a great contest which raged in those days between the mendicants and the secular priests. He told me that every now and then the good priest of Hanwood returned from the abbot's parlour, and spoke of the matter; but he did not seem to take any great interest in it. He was only concerned for those who lived on the banks of the Rea, and looked to their improvement as far as he might. And so he left the disputants to themselves, and the controversy, as Fuller said, 'sank in silence, never more revived.'

The only other point on which my Talking Friend spoke much about this time was a dispute which arose in Shrewsbury between the corporation of the town and the abbey. It turned upon a small patch of ground on the east side of what we now call the English Bridge. The spot of ground itself was called Merivale, or Maryvale—carefully to be distinguished from Marivance, or Maryvaunce, leading from the west end of St. Chad's and Swan Hill towards the yet remaining walls. He who stood up for the rights of the abbey and held his ground, as well as maintained their cause successfully, was the then Abbot Thomas Mynde, a great friend of the priest who was at Hanwood in those days. He, as it was natural, sided entirely with the abbot, and frequently returned from the old town under great excitement. Hence it was that my Talking Friend knew so much of it.

It is anticipating the time, but it may as well be noted here that on the dissolution of the abbey in the time of

Henry VIII. the corporation received a grant from the town of the whole jurisdiction of the Abbey Forgate, including that minute portion of it, the long contested hamlet of Maryvale, or, as it appears to have been then spelt, 'Meryvalle'; a corruption, some have said, of St. Mary's Ville or Field; or of Miry Ville, from its low, marshy situation. One may call to mind that Richard marched out of Leicester in great pomp, with the crown on his head, and encamped at the abbey of Merrival, or Merivale, previous to the battle of Bosworth Field. It is a mile and a half west by south of Atherstone, and was dedicated to St. Mary; so far corroborating that derivation of the name.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIRST TUDOR.

Qui rex in nostrâ *septimus* urbe fuit.
OVID, *Fast.* vi. 624.

Hæc ratio quondam morborum, et mortifer æstus
Finibu' Cecropiis funestos reddidit agros,
Vastavitque vias; exhausit civibus urbem.
LUCRETIUS, vi. 1136, &c.

It fell out unto him according to the speech of the common people in the beginning of his reign that said, 'It was a token he should reign in labour because his reign began with a sickness of sweat.'—LORD BACON'S *Life of Henry VII.* vol. iii. 195. Ed. Basil Montagu.

He was a prince, sad, serious, and full of thoughts, and secret observations, and full of notes and memorials of his own hand, especially touching persons—as, whom to employ, whom to reward, whom to inquire of, whom to beware of, what were the dependencies, what were the factions, and the like—keeping, as it were, a journal of his thoughts. There is to this day a merry tale that his monkey, set on, as it is thought, by one of his chamber, tore his principal notebook all to pieces when by chance it lay forth; whereat the court, which liked not those pensive accounts, was almost tickled with sport.—IBID. p. 414.

Times have their changes; sorrow makes men wise;
The sun itself must set as well as rise.
FORD'S *Peter Warbeck*, act i. sc. 2.

'ABOUT this time,' said my Talking Friend to me one lovely morning, when his leaves were all dripping with dew and his acorns of a burnished green, like emeralds, 'the sweating sickness showed itself amongst us, and everything suffered under its malignant influence—vegetation, animals, and men. As for my own leaves, they were blotched all over, and I had scarce strength to put out my midsummer shoots; and as for the acorns, they fell before they were half ripe. The cattle also were stricken with a sort of lung disease, and many of the sheep died of footsores and the rot. We thought in our ignorance that the whole air was infected; more or less the

whole valley of the Rea was infected, and sickness and death were the inmates of every house. I have often heard you speak of the influenza of your days, and how, in particular, the access of 1840 attacked animals; how likewise it was a disorder of which continued sour and frothy perspirations were a constant symptom. Whether it was a pilot to the cholera or not, as was commonly reported, is one thing; but another is that in its sweating features it greatly resembled the heavy sickness of this time. Many an oakling died in those woods from want of sap and want of leaf to draw it up.'

Certainly the sweating sickness in Shrewsbury at this time created great alarm, whether it was brought there by Richmond's army or whether the seeds of it were there before, lurking in the purlieus of the White Horse Street, Frankwell, as my Talking Friend had some reason to think; for certainly it reached Hanwood from this suburb, as Nathan Hammond was the first that was attacked with it.

Probably, however, it had been doing its work of death in the north of England some time before this. This at least is certain, that when on the landing of Richmond, Richard sent for Lord Stanley, his reply was, that he could not come, as he was ill of the sweating sickness then prevailing. And this account is in all likelihood true, as his son was at this very time in Richard's hands. The malady, beyond a doubt, had broken out in York before the landing of Richmond. Stow's statement is, 'The sweating began September 21, and continued till the end of October, of the which sickness a wonderful number died; and in London, besides others, died Thomas Hill, mayor, the ancestor of the Hills of Hawkstone.' I may add that in the account of Dr. Caius, as quoted by the historians of Shrewsbury, nothing is said of its commencement there. The words are, 'In the yere of our Lord God 1485, shortly after the seventh daye of Auguste, at whiche tyme Kynge Henry VII. arrived at Milford, in Walles, out of Fraunce, and in the first yere of his reigne, there chaunced a disese amonge the people lastynge the rest of that monethe and all September, which for the souddeine sharpnes and unwont cruelnes passed the pesti-

lence'; and he adds, though he seems afterwards to have changed his opinion, that 'because it firste began in England it was named in other countries the Englishe sweat.' If my notes are correct, it showed itself in Shrewsbury under the several years 1485, 1518, 1528, 1551.

It will be worth the reader's while to refer to Camden and Gough's editions of the 'Britannia,' where he will find substantial truth under circumstantial evidence. It appears to have been treated of in Germany under the title of Ἱδροπυρέτη, before Dr. Caius wrote his treatise. Dr. Mead evidently alludes to this when he says, 'It is more probable that this disease was owing to imported contagion, because we are assured that this form of the sickness was not peculiar to our island, but that it made great destruction with the same symptoms in Germany and in other countries.'

As for the priest that was in Hanwood in those days, he looked upon all visitations of this sort as warnings, and when any scourge fell anywhere else, falling short of war, he thought he had the greater reason for taking heed; and, taught by this good old man on the Rea side, my Talking Friend would speak oracularly, and almost in Robert Langlande's words, declaring that we all of us, had we our deserts, ought to be well *belased*—our old provincial word for being flogged or beaten with a rod. And every day when I was a child, and heard the rustling of the old tree's leaves and the soft sweet murmurings of the stream hard by—

> Amende thee, while thou myght;
> Thou hast ben warned ofte
> With portents of pestilences,
> With poverte, and with angres;
> And with these bitter *baleises*
> God beteth His deere children.

Having spoken thus much of the sweating sickness as connected one way or another with the old town of Shrewsbury and with the Old Oak's vicinity, I shall venture to transcribe the following account of it from Lord Bacon's well-known 'Life of Henry VII.,' which must always be a work of great interest, though, as we now know from historical documents, he was too much of a panegyrist:—

'About this time in autumn, towards the end of September, there began and reigned in the city and other parts of the kingdom a disease, then new, which by the accidents and manner thereof they called the sweating sickness. This disease had a swift course both in the sick body and in the time and period of the lasting thereof; for they that were taken with it, upon four and twenty hours escaping, were thought almost assured; and as to the time of the malice and reign of the disease ere it ceased, it began about September 21, and cleared up before the end of October, insomuch as it was no hindrance to the king's coronation, which was the last of October, nor, which was more, to the holding of the parliament, which began but seven days after. It was a pestilent fever, but, as it seemeth, not seated in the veins or humours; for that there followed no carbuncle, no purple or livid spots, or the like, the mass of the body being not tainted; only a malign vapour flew to the heart, and seized the vital spirits, which stirred nature to strive to send it forth by an extreme sweat. And it appeared by experience that this disease was rather a surprise of nature than obstinate to remedies if it was in time looked to. For if the patient was kept in an equal temper, both for clothes, food, and drink, moderately warm, with temperate cordials, whereby nature's work was neither irritated by heat nor turned back by cold, he commonly recovered. But infinite persons died suddenly of it before the manner of the cure and attendance were known. It was conceived not to be an epidemic disease, but to proceed from a malignity in the constitution of the air, gathered by the predispositions of seasons; and the speedy cessation declared as much.'

So much for the sweating sickness, to which, as I think, may be applied the words of Seneca; for something of it is to be seen in every accession of any new plague:—

> Nec adhuc omnes
> Expulit æstus; sed ut ingenti
> Vexata Noto servat longos
> Unda tumultus, et jam vento
> Cessante tumet.

An incident, referred by my Talking Friend to a much

later date—the days of Elizabeth, I think—will very properly come in here. It was a story to which the good old tree often alluded, having frequently heard it from the rector of Hanwood (for *so* the priest had long ago become), who loved to repeat it.

The story referred to was that of 'The Shepherd Lord,' the son of that Lord Clifford who had barbarously murdered the young Rutland, as before related, and who at the commencement of Henry VII.'s reign was restored to his rights and reinstated in his ancient possessions. The way in which this story reached the banks of the Rea was curious. It was brought by a travelling pedler, Nathan Pantin by name, a man much respected in his day, whose half-yearly visits and his pack were always looked for by the maidens of the vale. He was a great traveller and a great lover of scenery; and one of his annual journeys—part profit, part pleasure—was to the mountain district of Cumberland and Westmoreland. In the former county it was that he gathered his little ornamental nuggets of gold—from Goldscope and the vale of Newlands—to which his lady customers always took such a fancy; to say nothing of the pure malleable copper which he brought from Coniston. It was on his return from one of these journeys that he brought back with him the story of the Lord Clifford; of his twenty years' seclusion as a shepherd in the mountains; of the grandeur of Blencathra (the modern Saddleback); and of his retreat at Threlkeld, under the kind treatment of good old Sir Lancelot Threlkeld; to say nothing of the musical waters and stones of the Glenderatown, and of his wondrous astronomical knowledge picked up in these sublime solitudes; or of the two undying fish that swam through Bowscale Tarn to wait on him. Good reader, turn to Southey's 'Colloquies,' where he gives a sketch of the Cliffords, and then to Wordsworth's beautiful song at the feast of Brougham Castle, upon the restoration of Lord Clifford, the shepherd, to the estates and honours of his ancestors. How it would have delighted Nathan Pantin and the good old rector of Hanwood to read such lines as these, much more to have heard Wordsworth repeat them!—

From town to town, from tower to tower,
The red rose is a gladsome flower ;
Her thirty years of winter past,
The red rose is revived at last !
She lifts her head for endless spring,
For everlasting blossoming.
Both roses flourish, red and white,
In love and sisterly delight ;
The two that were at strife are blended,
And all old troubles now are ended.
Joy ! joy to both ! but most to her
Who is the flower of Lancaster.
Behold her, how she smiles to-day
On this great throng, this bright array !
Fair greeting doth she send to all
From every corner of the hall ;
But chiefly from above the board,
Where sits in state our rightful lord—
A Clifford—to his own restored !

And presently, reverting to his shepherd's life on Carrock side, the reader will find the legend of the fish above referred to:—

To his side the fallow deer
Came, and rested without fear ;
The eagle, lord of land and sea,
Stoop'd down to pay him fealty ;
And both the undying fish that swim
Through Bowscale Tarn did wait on him.
The pair were servants of his eye
In their immortality ;
They moved about in open sight
To and fro, for his delight.

In after days, as Southey remarks in his pensive style, 'the shepherd lord was the happiest of his race ; and, falling upon peaceful times, after his restoration, was enabled to indulge the peaceful and thoughtful disposition which his early fortunes had produced.' How could I ever forget the lovely day we spent together on Blencathra, or his rich, overflowing, unobtrusive conversation ?

I have omitted one remark of my Talking Friend relative to the rector of Hanwood. Having heard the story from beginning to end, he said that his face lightened up like the sun, and his eyes glistened ? 'By my troth, I never saw

him so delighted; and methinks, as I am heart of oak, he was ready to buy up all old Nathan's pack!'

I may note here that my Talking Friend seemed to think that Shrewsbury was benefited by remission of taxes after the battle of Bosworth Field; not, however, to the extent anticipated, owing to some mistake of theirs on the subject of 'benevolences' when the commissioners of the king visited the town in 1491. These 'benevolences,' in which really there was nothing *gratuitous* but the name, were a subject of no little talk. As to complaint, that which the Old Oak heard most of was by T. Kynaston, of the Lynches, not far from Nox and Newnham; and by Robert Thomas, of Edge, who both thought they were hardly used. And I called to mind how I had read in Lord Bacon's 'Life of Henry VII.' the 'tradition of a dilemma that Bishop Morton, the Chancellor, used to raise up the benevolence to higher rates; and some called it his *fork*, and some his *crutch*. For he had couched an article in the instructions to the commissioners who were to levy the benevolence that if they met with any that were sparing they should tell them that they must needs have, because they laid up; and if they were spenders they must needs have, because it was seen in their port and manner of living. So neither kind came amiss.' Whether Morton deserved to have this dilemma attached to his memory I dare not say, but there never was any doubt of Henry's avarice, as his panegyrist is obliged to confess. Hence Gifford seems justified in his concluding note to 'Peter Warbeck' that Ford has given 'a most faithful portraiture of the cold, calculating, stern, shrewd, and *avaricious* Henry.' The author of the 'Annals of England' is even more stringent, saying that 'he devoted his whole soul to the acquisition, even by the vilest means, of treasure, which he guarded, with all the jealousy of a miser, under his own lock and key.'

From the mention of a well-known name in the above panegyric, I must here add that my Talking Friend knew little about either Lambert Simnel, the baker's son of Oxford, who personated Edward, Earl of Warwick, or of the other supposed or supposititious Plantagenet, Perkin Warbeck, who personated Richard, Duke of York, son of Edward IV. Some

assert even yet that he has never been proved to be an impostor; but the Old Oak knew nothing of the matter one way or another. Owing to the similarity of his friend's name at Cruck Meole, he would have shaken his leaves and his boughs had he heard that he had been joined in his insurrection by *John Water*, late Mayor of Cork, who was not excepted in the general pardon of August 26, 1496, but was hanged with Peter Warbeck, November 23, 1499. Certainly these executions do not jump with Henry's own words, as put into his mouth by Ford:—

> The rigour and extremity of law
> Is sometimes too, too bitter; but we carry
> A chancery of pity in our bosom.

It is old Fuller, I think, who says so prettily, 'The chancery of heaven is always open.'

Henry VII. is said to have visited Shrewsbury in 1488 and 1490. On the latter occasion 'the king, queen, and Prince Arthur were present at St. George's Feast, which was held at St. Chad's Church'; but documentary evidence seems wanting about this visit—so, at least, the historians of Shrewsbury appear to think. My Talking Friend could not enlighten me upon the matter, but the priest of Hanwood very well recollected the visit of Prince Arthur in 1494. Constituted guardian of the kingdom at six years of age, he was sent to reside in the Marches of Wales, and held his Court at Ludlow. It was on this occasion that a play—a mystery or a miracle play probably—was acted 'in the Quarrell' (now called the Quarry), which took its name from the stones *quarried* out of what is still called The Dingle, as it was when I was a child at Mr. Case's school, and which was their own boundary.

The reason why the priest of Hanwood so well recollected this play was because the whole valley of the Rea was in a commotion, and they went to Shrewsbury by troops over what is now called Kingsland, and returned in a most excited state, saying that they had seen a most wonderful show, and that there were quantities of wine distributed among the king's servants, though he was not present, and that many of them had had draughts of Gascony wine themselves—a drink

they had never before tasted in their lives, and of which they spoke with high satisfaction.

There was an ancient well-known hostel near the present Kingsland, well known in those days, and long after, to the wayfarer. On the occasion just referred to Giles Emery, the landlord, was not half contented with his profits, asserting that the profuseness of the corporation had interfered with the sale of his liquors, never before known to be complained of, for he was one who might have said with Boniface, in Farquhar's 'Beaux Stratagem,' 'I have now in my cellar casks of the best ale in Shropshire ; 'tis smooth as oil, sweet as milk, clear as amber, and strong as brandy.' None in that neighbourhood but knew Giles Emery well, and loved to hear the creak of his signboard, and to sit upon his bench beneath the noble trees that shaded it. Besides he was a very kindly man, and never forgot the poor thirsty wayfarer. Perhaps the ancient hostel described in Blackfriars was not unlike to this in some respects. 'The ancient hostel was of quaint aspect, but prettily situated in a wild and legendary spot. It was almost completely overshadowed by a gigantic oak tree, on one of the lower branches of which swung its signboard, and under the shadow whereof was placed a rough hewn table and some benches for the accommodation of those customers who preferred open air entertainment.' Looking on the Gascony wine as it flowed liberally that day, Giles Emery was one to have said—

> First use thy stomach to a stand of ale
> Before thy Malmesey come in marchantes' barks.

In the year 1495, the king, the queen, the Countess of Richmond (the King's mother), and all the family were in Shrewsbury, and lodged at the abbey, and were treated with the well-known saffron simnels of the county and potent hippocras. Of this visit the priest of Hanwood knew everything, for he was an acceptable guest in the refectory, having supplied the pantler with some of the finest wheat flour for the simnels, and the cook with some of the finest trout ever taken out of the Rea, these being considered more delicate than the trouts taken out of the Severn. And although about this

time a law was enacted against taking game, or eggs of hawks or swans on the estate of another—said to be practised by persons having little substance to live upon—the abbot's kitchen was well supplied.

It was upon this occasion that the old question concerning the jurisdiction of Merivale was mooted afresh, without any results; but the great matter for the town was the grant by the king of the new charter. For the history of this grant, which was a great boon, the reader is referred to the historians of Shrewsbury. Hanwood is one of the contributing parishes mentioned in it, and thus far concerned the priest and the Old Oak.

Some years later than this the priest of Hanwood spoke of a great house that was being built in Shrewsbury by good Mr. Peter Newton (he was son to the chancellor of the Marches, and afterwards a great favourite with the king and the people of Shrewsbury, whose interests he looked to at Court), who had purchased the site for it from the widow of Sir Roger Kynaston. This fact is mentioned here because much of the oak used in its construction came from the woods in the valley of the Rea, and because it afterwards became a house of much note as 'the occasional residence of the council in the Marches of Wales': as all old Shrewsbury boys know, it still retains its name. What a pleasure was it in my boyhood to see three such benevolent, excellent men as Mr. Blakeway, Archdeacon Owen, and dear old Rowland step forth from its precincts! Few men have been greater benefactors—Bishop Butler alone excepted—to our good old town. In his mention of 'Ludloe,' Churchyard thus refers to the council:—

> A goodly seate, where oft the councell lies,
> Where monuments are found in auncient guyse,
> Where kings and queenes in pompe did long abyde,
> And where God pleasde that good Prince Arthur dyde.

My Talking Friend once told me that not unfrequently on their way to Shrewsbury the king's Welsh minstrels would rest and try their strings beneath his shade, and that the priest of Hanwood, who was very fond of music, always received them hospitably. The accounts of the corporation in Shrewsbury

verify this statement, and thrifty, parsimonious, or avaricious as Henry was, he seems both to have loved music and to have encouraged the arts. I must still like these lines, which I heard as a child :—

Sad harp of Wales,
Thy wild and mournful melodies,
Though muffled now in silent slumbers,
Have gained the good and won the wise
To weep and worship at thy numbers.
By him, the warrior bard of yore,
That wailed his twenty sons and four ;
By him in watery cradle found
By royal hand with honours crown'd ;
By broken-hearted Hoel's urn
Clos'd by cold Myvanwy's scorn ;
By all the bards of sorrowing swells,
Mournful and many as thy dells ;
How oft have they thy dirges swept,
To heaving heart's indignant glowing,
And eyes like trickling wells that wept,
To feel thy sounds of sorrow flowing,
Sad harp of Wales !

Somewhere about this time—probably in 1506—the priest of Hanwood, on special invitation, paid a visit to the abbot of Shrewsbury, who was stopping at Abbot's Eyton, near Wroxeter, one of his country seats, when he dined off a 'samon-morte and a hernesawe.' My Talking Friend recollected the circumstance well, because it chanced to be a very dry summer. On this occasion the priest picked up many curiosities, and, as the waters were low, thought he could detect foundations of an old bridge in the Severn. What he surmised has since been corroborated.

My Talking Friend said it was the priest of Hanwood's opinion that throughout this reign the people were progressing, and we now know that many entails of the nobility were cut off, and that portions of their estates passed into the hands of rich commoners. Together with this, though not quite simultaneous, was that great change in the condition of the *villani*, or *villeins*, whose services were exchanged for money. Thus, out of the *villeins* we have our modern *tenantry*, and a great advance in our liberties.

There is no doubt that Henry VII. greatly increased

the British navy—even built, Stow says, 'a ship named the "Great Harry," which ship, with the furniture, cost him as much' as the new Lady Chapel, or, as it is now called, King Henry VII.'s Chapel, at Westminster. But neither that, nor the discovery of America by Columbus, nor the history of Sebastian Gabato, 'a Genoa's sonne, borne in Bristowe,' as Stow calls him; 'a Venetian, dwelling in Bristol, a man seen and expert in cosmography and navigation,' as Lord Bacon writes, was a matter which reached the banks of the Rea. All my Talking Friend knew at that time were the coracles on the Meole Brook and the old floats on the Severn. I may add that Stow says quaintly, 'This yeare were brought unto the king three men taken in the new found islands by Sebastian Gabato, before named, in 1498. These men were clothed in beasts' skins, and eate raw flesh, but spake such a language as no man could understand them; of the which three men, two of them were seene in the king's court at Westminster two yeares after, clothed like Englishmen, and could not be discerned from Englishmen.'

The great tempest of 1506, which drove Philip into England, and was interpreted, Lord Bacon says, 'to be an ominous prognostic upon the imperial house,' was not unfelt on the banks of the Rea. The Old Oak heard the sighing of the wind as it came up from Habberley Hole; and presently, he said, there was a sob and a moan (what, I suppose, the Scotch call a 'sough'), as if for the misery and destruction it was about to commit from one end of the valley to the other, and then followed the roar and the wreck of the storm in all its wild fury. 'This tempest,' says Stow, 'was strange to many men, because the violence thereof had blown down the eagle of brass from the spire of St. Paul's Church in London, and in the falling the same eagle brake and battered the black eagle which hung for a sign in St. Paul's Churchyard, that time being but low houses, where now is the schoole of Paules'; which Lord Bacon called 'a strange stooping of a hawk upon a fowl.' It was in this same year that Henry VII. fell sick, and the sweating sickness again showed itself, but not with its former violence.

Owing to Perkin Warbeck and divers of his company

having registered themselves as sanctuary men at Beaulieu, in the New Forest, the question of sanctuary, which has been mentioned more than once in these pages, was now mooted afresh, and the value of the pope's bull, obtained many years before (in the year 1487, when Lambert Simnel was made a turnspit of in the king's kitchen), was admitted by all, though it did come from Rome. The truth is that 'sanctuary' nowadays was a very different thing to what it was in the early days of the Norman kings, and the abuse of it needed to be repressed. This was admitted even in the abbot's parlour at Shrewsbury, where the priest of Hanwood heard it much discussed. But for the matter at length the reader is referred to the pages of Lord Bacon or Collier.

Of the jubilee of 1500, and of the pope's payments, little or nothing had reached the banks of the Rea. It appears that it took some time to collect—as much as five years—and it is of this that old Fuller says, 'Yet we envy Rome this payment the less because it was the last in this kind she did generally receive out of England. Meantime King Henry VII. did enter into common with the pope, having part allowed to connive at the rest. Thus, whilst the pope and the prince shared the wool betwixt them, the people were finely fleeced.' Fuller gives this statement on the authority of Archbishop Parker. It is, however, a disputed matter, and Lord Bacon, who is followed by Collier, states that Jasper Pens, the pope's commissioner, acted 'with great wisdom and semblance of holiness,' proving, by a letter from Cardinal Adrian that Henry did not share in the spoil. It is painful to have to state, though Lord Bacon refers to their rarity, that there were those in this reign who were branded and burnt for the profession of the truth.

Of Empson and Dudley, called by the people the kings 'horse-leeches and shearers,' and of the Star Chamber, instituted in this reign, my Talking Friend had heard but little; and I am not sure from what he reported of the priest of Hanwood but that the latter had formed a more favourable opinion of Henry VII. than posterity has done. At all events, to say nothing of the noble hospital of the Savoy, the priest, from local circumstances, was much interested in

the foundation of St. John's College, Cambridge, 1508, by the Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond. 'To make this part of his character more unquestionable, his private alms were very considerable, and in his will he ordered the money unjustly wrested from his subjects should be restored. However, if the report mentioned by Lord Bacon be true, that he used to have his own spies'—'*espials*,' Lord Bacon calls them—'solemnly cursed at St. Paul's to make them pass more unsuspected; if this be true, I say, his conscience was sometimes lamentably overruled, and his *morals* suffered by his *politics* in a deplorable manner.' Such is the conclusion of Collier, who still, I think, favours him. He is said to have left 1,800,000*l.* in the Exchequer, on which Fuller remarks: 'We may the less wonder that this money was so speedily spent by his successor; a great part thereof, being gotten by sin, was spent on sin.'

It is said that everyone has some sly cranny and corner of superstition in his character. Richard III., we have reason to believe, was very superstitious, and easily wrought upon by visions and prophecies, 'the belief of fools, but the talk sometimes of wise men.' Such also was the case with Henry VII., whom the Lady Margaret haunted with spirits, and magic, and curious arts. One of his smaller superstitions was his regard for Saturday. 'He entered the city,' says Lord Bacon, 'upon a Saturday, as he had also obtained the victory upon a Saturday; which day of the week, first upon an observation and after upon memory and fancy, he accounted and chose as a day prosperous unto him.' Hence Ford makes him say—

> This day of the week is ours,
> Our day of providence; for Saturday
> Yet never failed, in all my undertakings,
> To yield me rest at night.

Lord Bacon makes one remark on Henry which must not be omitted. He states that 'the king was grown to be such a partner with fortune as nobody could tell what actions the one and what the other owned.' It reminds me of two lines of Drayton's 'Barons' Wars':—

> All things concur with fair, successful chance
> To raise that man whom fortune will advance.

Somewhere about this time a wonderful fair took place at Pontesbury, which even then bore the name of 'THE WAKES.' As my Talking Friend constantly referred to this '*feria*,' or *fair*, it must evidently have been a great gathering. Indeed, he represented the whole vale of Hanwood as emptied from Edgbold to Hinton, and there was not a sack of flour left in the mills at Cruck Meole or Cruckton; and he believed that from the other side people came all the way from Montgomery, and Chirbury, and Worthen, and Minsterley, and Westbury, and the Gordwi. Since wakes and fairs were known—traced in the neighbourhood quite from the time of Henry III.—there never was one known like to this, and Ovid might have said of it—

> Pagus agat festum: pagum lustrate, coloni;
> Et date paganis annua liba focis.

And this set me a-thinking upon the subject of wakes and fairs, and I called it to mind as remarkable that in England wakes and fairs were very closely assimilated; and as the vigils, or wakes, were held on the *eve*, whether of Sunday or saint's day, so because there was a concourse of the people were the fairs. 'I hardly need say,' remarks Mr. Eyton in his 'Antiquities of Shropshire,' and with special reference to the church of St. Leonard at Bridgenorth, 'that the patron saint of a parish church is often identical with the saint on whose anniversary the principal fair of the said parish is, or was, held.' The cautional insertion of the word 'often' he illustrates in a later volume with reference to the church of Atcham, seated on the bank of the river Severn, near Shrewsbury, dedicated to St. Eatha the Confessor. His day fell on October 26, while the feast of St. Giles was selected for the epoch of an annual fair. The theory, therefore, is non-universal which supposes that there was any necessary association between the two things—the saint's day of a parish church and the saint's day of a parish fair. It was, however, as stated above, very common, and the exception, as usual, seems to prove the rule.

If the reader will take pains to consult either 'Domesday' or any good treatise upon that invaluable record and monu-

ment, he will find much to the purpose. For instance, in Sir Henry Ellis' Introduction the market of St. Germans, in Cornwall, is expressly said to have been held 'in die Dominico,' on Sunday. This was forbidden by the laws of the Northumbrian priests about the year 950. Again, in the 'Liber Constitutionum' of King Æthelred, and in the laws of Canute. Matthew Paris, however, informs us, under the year 1200, that fairs and markets were constantly so held in England from a remote period. He is speaking of Eustace, abbot of Flai, who came into England in the time of King John. The statute of the 27th of King Henry VI. intended to abolish the custom entirely; but it continued in use in Wales and its Marches even in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and, I may add, very much later.

Appertaining, for instance, to the subject in hand, and to the wonderful fair at Pontesbury, to which my Talking Friend had called my attention, those who can recollect the wakes at Pontesbury, not sixty years since (for I am not yet sixty years of age, and I recollect them well), will call to mind strange doings *sub ipsis ecclesiis, atque in cæmeteriis* (as Spelman speaks), and such as quite bear out that petition from the preacher at Bishop's Castle, in Shropshire, which established the fact of this full continuance. The document is so much to the purpose that I must give it at length from the valuable page of Sir Henry Ellis' Introduction just above quoted. It is extracted from the Lansdowne manuscripts in the British Museum:—

'*To the Right Honourable William, Baron of Burghley, Lord Highe Treasorer of England:*

'Your supplt., Walter Stephens, preacher at Bushoppe's Castle, in the countie of Salop, where contrarie to the expresse worde of God, and contrarie also to the lawes of this realme, the fayres holden not onlie in the towne of Bushoppe's Castle, but also for the moste parte in all other townes in Wales, and the Marches thereof, happening upon the Sondaie and Saboath daie, are holden upon the same Sondaie and Saboath daie on which they fall, to the high displeasure of Almightie God. And where in all the chiefe

cities and townes of this realme, and in all east, west, and south parts of the realme, and in many other civil and well ordered places, the same greate abuse is reformed, and remaineth unreformed chieflie in Wales and the Marches thereof, which causeth, no doubte, God's heavie hande over them. Your humble supplt. meaneth, by your lordship's favour, to exhibite a peticion unto your lordship and the rest of the lordes of her Ma'tie's most honourable previe councell for reformation therein to be had ; wherein he most humblie beseecheth youre most honourable lordship, being one of the chiefe patrons of true religion, that it would share the same in this so charitable and good a service, to give your lordship's special assistance, and countenance a worke no doubt most acceptable unto Almighty God.'

This 'peticion' is endorsed with the date of October 24, 1595. Above it, in Lord Burghley's own hand is, 'Lett this sute be moved to the councell, and I will further it.—W. Burghley.'

Very different is this from the good sense of wakes given under the word 'Mayne,' afterward more commonly spelt 'Meiny,' in Hearne's Glossary to 'Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle.' In the chronicle of the Heralds' Office the prose author hath these words in his account of the battle between King Harold and Duke William: '*The duc and his mayne the nyght to fore the bataylle* waked *in prayers and fastinges, and so spent all the nyght in holynesse.* And this was agreeable to the old custom of keeping WAKES, and it was from this watching and keeping themselves awake in a devout manner all night that the name had its original.'

Wishing to throw together some notes on this subject, which till within forty years has been one much canvassed in the old county of Shropshire, I will insert here the substance of White Kennett's valuable contributions in his 'Parochial Antiquities,' &c.

'The wakes, or customary festival for the dedication of churches, does signify the same as vigil or eve. The reason of the name is best given from an old MS. legend of St. John Baptist: "*And ye shall understand and know how the evyns were furst found in old tyme. In the begynning of holy*

Chirch it was so that the pepull cam to the chirch with candellys brennyng, and would wake and coome with light toward night to the chirche in their devocions; and after they fell to lecherie, and songs, and dansses, harping, piping, and also to gluttony, and sinne, and so tourned the holiness to cursydnes. Wherefore holy faders ordained the pepull to leve that waking, and to fast the evyn. But it is called Vigilia, that is, wakyng in English, and it is called the evyn, for at evyn they were wont to come to chirche." It was in imitation of the primitive ἀγάπαι, or love-feasts, that such public assemblies, accompanied with friendly entertainments, were first held upon each return of the day of consecration, though not in the body of churches, yet in the churchyards, and most nearly adjoining places. The institution of these Church encænia, or wakes, was no question on good and laudable designs; as, first, thankfully to commemorate their bounty and munificence, who had founded and endowed the church; next to incite others to like generous acts of piety; and chiefly to maintain a Christian spirit of unity and charity by such sociable and friendly meetings: and thus due care was taken to keep up the laudable custom. The laws of Edward the Confessor gave peace and protection in all parishes during the solemnity of the day of dedication, and the same privilege to all who were going or returning from such solemnity.'

This follows in the groove of the Jewish worship and merciful ceremonial, after which the learned author adverts to the change in the day, much to be noted. 'At last,' says he, 'this convenience of Sunday above the week days was the reason of attempting an universal change. For among the injunctions of King Henry VIII., anno 1536, it was ordered that the dedication of churches should in all places be celebrated on the first Sunday of the month of October for ever. Yet this order was not enforced or not obeyed; but, however, most of these jubilees are now celebrated near the time of Michaelmas, when a vacation from the labour of harvest and the plough does afford the best opportunity for visits and sports: so at Pidington and other places in this county. This transposing of the day has left it more difficult to know the saint to whose protection the church was committed.

There be only these grounds of safe conjecture. Such wakes as are observed after the first or second Sunday after Michaelmas Day, in these we may doubt a translation of time by virtue of the said injunction of Henry VIII., or by a prevailing custom of postponing such solemnity to the end of harvest; and in such cases the saint may be lost, unless some other was preserved. But as to those whose wakes are precedent to Michaelmas or distant from that time, those we may believe have continued in their primitive relation to their proper saint, and no further removed than to the Sunday following. For whenever these Sunday wakes are guided by a foregoing festival we may be justly satisfied the church was dedicated to the saint of that day. It is a rational and just opinion of Sir Henry Spelman that fairs were first occasioned by the resort of people to that place for solemnising some festival, and especially the feast of the church's dedication. And hence he thinks it easy to conjecture to what saint the church had been commended by the fair-day. To confirm the original of fairs from the dedication of churches, it is observable that on this account fairs were generally kept in churchyards, and even in churches, till the indecency and scandal were so great as to want a reformation.' On which follows the regulation so much needed, dating 1230 (14 Henry III.) Yet this corruption did long after this time prevail, for in a comment on the ten commandments by way of dialogue between Dives and Pauper, printed at London, anno 1493, we find a zealous complaint of the profane custom:—

'DIVES: *What sayst thou of them that hold markets and fayrs in holy church and in sanctuary?* PAUPER: *Both the byer and the seller, and men of holy church that maintain them, or suffer them, when they might lett it, been accursed. They make Goddes house a den of theyves; for commonly in such fayres and markets wheresoever it be holden, theyre ben many theyves, mychers, and cut-purse.* DIVES: *And I dread me that full often by such fayres Goddes house is made a tavern of gluttons, a bordel of leychers. For the marchantes and chapmen kepe theyre wyth them theyr wives and lemans both night and day. And what if the prelates and curates of the*

place take moneys of the chapmen for the place that they stand in by covenants?' &c. &c.

It was likewise by this relation of fairs to the wakes, or days of dedication, that an old custom crept in of keeping some fairs upon the very Sundays, because the dedication feasts fell on those days, till this abuse like the other was thought fit to be restrained, &c. &c. They were the anniversaries of a church's dedication celebrated in populous towns with an accustomed fair, and in the most private parishes—such as Pontesbury—with feasting and a great concourse of people. And as there have been many gifts and legacies to universities and colleges for the commemoration of founders' and benefactors' days, so were some donations made to chapels purely for this pious use of more solemnly celebrating the wake or dedication feast. As usual, abuse led to disuse, and although, perhaps, we may be thankful to the Puritans for their zeal, we can hardly call the old wake a remnant of popery; and the curtailing of the people of their old enjoyments only led to extremes in another direction, not less reprehensible. 'However,' concludes Kennett, 'by such a popular prejudice against wakes, and by the intermission of them in the late confusions, they are now discontinued in many counties, especially in the east and western parts of England, but are commonly recorded in the north, and in these midland parts'—that is, in the counties of Oxford and Bucks, to which may be added the time-honoured county of Salop.

As a matter of course fairs were the great resort of the people when roads were bad and traffic small. Nothing illustrates the fact better than the various prices at the same time. According to the historian Honey's statement, 'the prices of the most valuable and necessary commodities were sometimes more than double in some places to what they were in others. We are informed, for example, by a contemporary author that, A.D. 1258, a quarter of wheat cost twenty shillings at Northampton, when it was sold for eight shillings and sixpence at Dunstable. This could not have happened if intelligence had been regular, and commercial intercourse safe and easy.'

Then, again, the people had to struggle against all sorts of exactions and tolls; sometimes in every town—sometimes in every barony and lordship—in every manor, and at every bridge. The fable of Nessus the Centaur, on the river Evenus, became in this sense almost a reality. These imposts, however, to a certain extent were saved at fairs, though the owners of goods had their several compositions to make. The trade, it is admitted, can at all times make better bargains than *individuals*, and so it was: and hence it is that 'Covetise' says in Piers Ploughman—

To Wy and to Winchester I went to the faire;

on which line the reader should by all means connect the note of T. Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry,' on which Henry has drawn largely in the following paragraph:—

'The greatest part of the domestic trade of Britain was still transacted at fairs. Some of these fairs were of long duration, frequented by prodigious multitudes of people from different countries, and stored with commodities of all kinds. The fair of St. Giles's Hill, near Winchester, continued sixteen days, during which time all trade was prohibited in Winchester, Southampton, and every place within seven miles of the fair, which very much resembled a great city laid out into many regular streets of tents, inhabited by foreign and domestic traders, who exposed their various commodities to sale.'

Our great fairs at present are pretty much confined to cattle and horses; such, for example, as Barnet, Horncastle, or Horringer, in Suffolk. But the great fair of St. Giles, at Winchester, might be more fitly compared with that of Novgorod, in Russia; for May Fair, Hyde Park, under the authority of a grant to the abbot of Westminster, and the Lady Fair, Southwark, under a grant to the corporation of London, were not to be compared to that. Neither yet again was Portsdown Fair, which lasted even till our own days, and previous to which all crops, by a clause in the leases, were obliged to be cleared from the ground, and which appears to have been granted as early as the time of Richard I., for fourteen days continuous, with all the privileges of St. Giles

at Winchester, and other like great fairs, such as was that notorious one of Beaucaire, in France, for eight days, from July 21 to 28. With reference to some such jubilee as a large fair it is that Shakespeare says—

> Therefore are feasts so seldom and so rare,
> Since seldom coming, in the long year set,
> Like stones of worth they dimly placed are,
> Or captain jewels in the carcanet.

Something like to this, too, must be the 'grand mela, or fair,' in Cashmere, which Captain Knight speaks of in his very interesting 'Diary', and differing considerably from the notorious Bartholomew Fair, and its court of *pie-poudre*, or *curia pedis pulverizati*, implying, Sir Henry Spelman says, '*litem citius in eâ transigi, quàm pulvis à pedibus excutiatur.*' Needed, no doubt, was quick justice, for, as Haggise says in Ben Jonson's well-known play, 'Who would have thought anybody would have quarrell'd so early; or that the ale o' the fair would have been up so soon?' No doubt, as Busy says afterwards, 'Bottle ale is a drink of Satan's, a diet drink of Satan's, devised to puff us up, and make us swell in this latter age of vanity.'

As the privileges of fairs and wakes have been above alluded to, the Oxford reader may like to see the following extract from the '*Reliquiæ Hearnianæ*':—

'St. Frideswide's Fair was in old time a most famous thing, and merchants and tradesmen used to come thither from all parts. It was first granted by Henry I. to be kept within the bounds of the priory of St. Frideswide every year upon the feast of St. Benedict, January 12, for twelve days together, which afterwards Henry III. translated to St. Frideswide's Day, October 19. It was kept in St. Frideswide's Meadow. During the fair the prior of St. Frideswide's had vast privileges, and as soon as it began the keys of all the gates of the city used to be surrendered or delivered up to him by the mayor and bailiffs, in token of his having the custody of the whole village of Oxford at that time, during which the religious of that place had the custody of assize of bread and ale, and of weights and measures. But it seems great complaints were made in the time of Edward III. of the

remissness or negligence of the canons of St. Frideswide in this affair, which indeed was so great that afterwards, in the reign of Richard II., the chancellor of the university put out an edict forbidding the merchants to come there any more, and commanding the affair (*query*, "the fair") to be discontinued ; and thereupon the scholars would have thrown down their books, broken the cords, and done other mischief had not the king's officer at arms come to Oxford, and protected the canons from the rage of the scholars.'

Whoever shall take upon himself to investigate the history of wakes and fairs, so closely connected together, will find that even in England they are a matter of great antiquity. Stourbridge, the notorious Cambridgeshire fair, is thought to date back as far as the days of the Romans ; and if we look throughout the world now all great assemblages of the people are, in some sense, 'FERIÆ,' or 'FAIRS.' For example, though a religious concourse, Mecca is a fair ; Juggernaut is a fair ; and the heart of Africa boasts fairs, whether for palm oil only or for that infamous and most demoralising traffic in slaves, which has been encouraged from time immemorial. Thus, what is intended for reciprocal benefit is too often turned into a bane by the cupidity, the avarice, and the wickedness of men. When such is the case it is sad, very sad ; for when a nation calling itself Christian has held its fairs in its churchyards, and even in the church itself, how difficult is it for a man to get up in his place and rebuke the heathen ? What can be more painful than the very simple account Livingstone gives of the slave trade ? It was buying and selling, and an unholy traffic from beginning to end ; so that an aged man could only say in sorrow—

> Prayers are the weapons
> Which men, so near their graves as I, do use ;
> I've little else to do.

It is said in that remarkable drama, the 'Nil Durpan,' which created such a sensation in India twenty-five years ago, 'All bamboos are of one tuft ; out of one is made the frame of the goddess Durga, and of another the sweeper's basket.'

No less diversified are the articles in our wakes and fairs, in which, to use an Indian proverb from the same work—

The thief never hears the instructions of religion.

Such were some of the thoughts which came across me as my Talking Friend spoke of the wake and the marvellous fair at Pontesbury; and, oddly enough, at the very time I was putting together the notes I lighted upon the following, in 'Gotthold's Emblems,' a curious work of Christian Scriver's, before referred to:—

THE FAIR.

'Hearing of a fair which had been held in a certain town, and of the vast multitudes which had attended it, Gotthold observed, "The great majority of these people were actuated by the hope of temporal gain, which may be called the sun of worldly hearts, inasmuch as these all turn, like sunflowers, towards it; or we may call it, as did the shrewd Dutchman, the fifth gospel of corrupt Christendom, and the grand idol of the present world which so many thousands will worship and serve. Oh, that there were among us the same keen desire for spiritual gain! A mountebank comes forward and publishes his lies at the highest pitch of his voice, and hundreds gather around, and never tire of listening to him. But let a preacher or minister of Jesus Christ appear on the Sabbath, and make offer to all of his Master's succour and grace, and, alas! how few there are who have any heart's desire for the gifts!"'

It was somewhere about this time, if I recollect aright, that, as my Talking Friend told me, the priest of Hanwood had been on one of his visits to the abbey in Shrewsbury, and he mentioned on his return how he had heard an aged monk read a homily to his brethren in the refectory as they sat at dinner. It was on a high day and a holiday, and as far as I could make out it was delivered from that beautiful pulpit which yet remains as a study for the antiquarian, and was the delight of my boyhood—covered with ivy in the spring and incarnadined with the leaves of the Virginian creeper in autumn. This, I have no doubt, was the reader's pulpit on

the walls of the refectory, and the custom of reading a homily, or a portion of Holy Scripture, at meal times is of very great antiquity, and was adopted in his famous rule by St. Benedict. The following extract from Archdeacon Owen tends to prove that my Talking Friend was not incorrect as to time: 'The beauty of this singular fragment, which is conceived to be not older than the time of Henry VII., is much heightened by the luxuriant ivy that mantles it, and the mellow tint of its stone, which is grey, whilst all the other remains of the abbey are of a heavy deep red.' The anagnostes of the Romans was probably the origin of the reader of the refectory, but their style of reading was very different.

My servant, let the world alone :
Safe on the steps of Jesu's throne,
Be tranquil, and be blest !

My Talking Friend added that the priest of Hanwood had returned in haste from the abbey on this occasion, as it was necessary to fill up a churchwarden's place owing to a death. It seems to have been a matter of no small concern in those days, if the following form, given by Hearne, from the parish of Great Farringdon, Bucks, be a veritable and true one. The words of admission were: 'Cherche wardengs, thys shal be your charge, To be true to God and to the Cherche; for love nor favor off no man wythein thys paroche to wythold any ryght to the Cherche, but to reserve the detty's to hyt belongythe, *or ellys to goo to the devell.*' The date of this remarkable document is 1518.

As opposed to this rough language I will venture to add that the priest of Hanwood said that although many high dignitaries of the Church at this time were high and lordly, yet there were others whose delight was to be a blessing to all around them. I find this confirmed by a passage in Hearne's Preface to Langtoft's 'Chronicle,' with which I will conclude this long chapter :—

'Bishops also were men of diffusive charity, insomuch that Richard Redman, first Bishop of St. Asaph, then of Exeter, and afterwards of Ely, where he died and was buried, anno 1505, as he was a person of great liberality and bounty,

and of a virtuous and godly life, so when he travelled through any towns where he stayed but an hour he caused a bell to be rung that the poor and indigent might come and partake of his charity, which he plentifully bestowed amongst them.'

If such were the custom of bishops nowadays, oyster women, as Hudibras said—

> Would not lock their fish up,
> And trudge away to cry, NO BISHOP !

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